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AUTHOR Abery, Brian; Bonner, Mike; Fossum, Paul; Koch, Tom; Montie, Jo; Nordness, Kurt; Taylor, Pam; Vandercook, Terri

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ABSTRACT

This monograph presents the "Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment," which offers a perspective on social interaction in the process of change. The framework attempts to integrate the dynamic features of educational reform by attending to components linked with personal and collective investment in reform initiatives. Chapters address: (1) the context that surrounds the framework and learning themes that occur throughout the monograph; (2) the six-year historical development and implementation of one service delivery effort and the challenges encountered as the grant team sought to understand and contribute to the continuing improvement at this school; (3) issues related to the question of how individual and collective investment are affected by interaction patterns and community habits; (4) a description of the Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment; (5) the Interactive Communication Initiative for facilitating communication and cultivating investment; and (6) strengths and caveats of the model, and suggestions on application and research of the framework. The last chapter presents a responsive series of reflection questions designed to assist readers in applying aspects of the framework in their own school contexts. Each chapter includes references. (CR)

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The Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment:

INTRODUCING A MODEL TO ENHANCE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

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The Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment:

INTRODUCING A MODEL TO ENHANCE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

Edited by:

MIKE BONNER
TOM KOCH
JO MONTIE
PAUL FOSSUM
TERRI VANDERCOOK

Authored by the Shared Responsibility Project:

BRIAN ABERY
MIKE BONNER
PAUL FOSSUM
TOM KOCH
JO MONTIE
KURT NORDNESS
PAM TAYLOR
TERRI VANDERCOOK

Institute on Community Integration (UAP), University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; and the Hopkins School District (I.S.D. #270), Hopkins, Minnesota.

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Institute on Community Integration (UAP)
University of Minnesota
109 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612/624-4512 (voice)
612/624-9344 (fax)

http://www.ici.coled.umn.edu/ici/ (website)

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The efforts described in this monograph were supported by the Shared Responsibility Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. This grant project involved a four-year school reform collaboration among the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration, the Hopkins (Minnesota) School District, and "Sand Hill School," a pseudonym for a specific school in Hopkins.

More specifically, however, we wish to overtly thank the people who make up these "systems," since it is people who create and sustain school improvement efforts. Therefore, we acknowledge the Hopkins School District staff, parents, and students who contributed to our learning, and specifically the people of Sand Hill School. And, we thank the members of the grant's Project Management Team, Sand Hill School's Inclusion Mentorship Team, the Hopkins Special Education Advisory Committee, the Interactive Communication Initiative Leadership Team, and the Hopkins Group Leaders of Special Services. Members of these groups, individually and collectively, have contributed to the learning represented in this monograph. There was encouragement, discomfort, celebration, frustration, insight, conflict, and inspiration offered in these relationships. We thank you for these gifts.

In addition, we appreciate the Institute on Community Integration's Publications staff in editing and layout support.

In addition, special thanks is offered to those who endured earlier drafts of this monograph: Peg Dawson, Karen Filla, Joe Ulman, Heidi Neumann, Diann Koch, and Carl Besser; and to those who attended our national conference presentations (NASP 1995 and ASCD 1997) and our numerous local presentations. Without the opportunity for your early feedback, this monograph would not be possible.

Finally, a heart-felt thanks to our families. Our persistence to complete this task would not have been possible without the support of each of our family members. You gave us endless patience and for this we offer endless gratitude.

FOREWARD

There is broad agreement that school reform efforts must lead to continuous improvement in schools in order to have a positive impact on students' academic and social development. Schools are encouraged to be action-oriented learning communities that flexibly respond to new and better information about a myriad of potential innovations. The level of agreement, however, dwindles as to *how* schools can effectively initiate and sustain these kinds of school improvement efforts. Numerous models and processes are intended to support continuous and self-renewing school improvement that is aligned with a collective vision (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Hall & Hord, 1987; Havelock 1995; Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993; Schmoker, 1996; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994). Each model contributes to the dialogue of school reform, reflecting orientations that are strategic, exploratory, or developmental. In application, all models that support educational change processes ultimately must reconcile organizational goals with community relationships (Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1997).

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this monograph is to present the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* – also referred to as "the framework" and "the model" – which offers a perspective on social interaction in the process of change. The Shared Responsibility Framework attempts to integrate the dynamic features of educational reform by attending to components linked with personal and collective investment in reform initiatives. We are at once eager and apprehensive about adding this framework to the growing body of literature and experience regarding school change. Our ultimate decision to disseminate this model comes from the belief that it contributes to achieving that elusive balance between obtainable improvements in daily reality and more idealistic aspirations (Conoley & Gutkin, 1986). In the end, we hope, through the presentation of this model, to serve the loftier goal of ensuring that all children are educated within inclusive settings. This is our collective passion and our ongoing commitment.

By sharing, through the context of a narrative, the learning that led to the Shared Responsibility Framework, we attempt to provide a common orientation to change processes. The story is about a grant team seeking to influence and understand school change at a suburban midwestern elementary school we'll refer to here as Sand Hill School. The grant team was comprised of people who possess a strong theoretical background in school reform and who brought to the Shared Responsibility effort successful past experiences at initiating innovative education practices. However, the struggles with complex and unanticipated factors affected how people engaged in these innovative practices over time, and it was the quest to understand and to accommodate these factors that inspired the model discussed here. The frustration, confusion, and conflict that the grant team experienced supplied a large dose of what Sarason (1995) has called "Vitamin H: Humbleness." But these challenging experiences also nurtured inquiry and gave rise to new understandings that we feel are valuable and that it is our purpose to relate here.

Certainly, as noted in the literature on educational reform, change and conflict go hand-in-hand (Berman & McLaughlin, 1977; Fullan, 1991; Stoll & Fink, 1996). But these challenges are frequently related as abstractions – lacking personal content, and, thus, adequate context. In this monograph, in order to provide the reader with better tools for meaning-making, we address this need for

context by describing our struggles – providing details, specific examples, and personal disclosures within an authentic experience. Our feelings about sharing our learning are therefore laced with some ambiguity: While our experiences seem important to share because they are real and meaningful, this disclosure also makes us vulnerable. Readers may read of our "failures" and conclude that there is no benefit in reading further to seek an understanding of our learning. Given the vulnerability we sense, it is perhaps not surprising that people engaged in school improvement rarely read about grant "failures" and major stumbles – notwithstanding the plentitude of failed school improvement efforts. Despite these concerns, we tell our story and invite you to engage in your own personal and collective reflection.

To foreshadow the following discussion, Chapter One sets the stage by describing the context that surrounds the framework and forecasts learning themes that occur throughout the monograph. Chapter Two describes the six-year historical development and implementation of one effort referred to here as Sand Hill School's Service Delivery Initiative. This accounting accentuates challenges encountered as the grant team sought to understand and contribute to the continuing improvement at this school. Chapter Three represents an analysis and interpretation of the Service Delivery Initiative experience and provides a particular look at issues related to the question of how individual and collective investment are affected by interaction patterns and community habits. The Service Delivery Initiative story (Chapter Two) and the analysis of this experience (Chapter Three) provides the context for understanding how a framework to support sustained and enhanced investment in dynamic, interactive change processes emerged; this model, the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*, is articulated in Chapter Four. Chapter Five describes another Sand Hill School initiative, referred to as the Interactive Communication Initiative, in order to illustrate one application of the framework's potential in facilitating communication and cultivating investment. Finally, Chapter Six briefly discusses some of the strengths and caveats of the model, and offers guidance on application and research of the framework. This invitation to apply the Shared Responsibility Framework is further expanded upon in Chapter Seven through the presentation of a discovery process, a specific yet responsive series of reflection questions designed to assist readers in applying aspects of the framework in their own school contexts. Table 1 provides another representation of the temporal flow of our experiences presented in this monograph.

The stories told in the ensuing chapters, and the Shared Responsibility Framework that evolved from reflection upon these experiences, are intended to support others in more effectively attending to issues of sustaining the investment of community members in improvement efforts. We acknowledge that, especially because of the written medium in which we present our story here, it is likely that our experiences and our learning may appear linear. But our lessons are not simple, straightforward, or sequential in nature. Rather, they are complex, interrelated, and circuitous – like much of life's lessons. Although we have necessarily compressed the story and made choices about what parts to emphasize, it is important that readers recognize that this description of our learning *is a representation at best*, and that the multiple influences of school life must be understood as rapidly emerging and sometimes simultaneously occurring.

In any case, it is our hope that the ideas presented here will help readers in the critical efforts necessary to create and sustain school improvements that, in turn, can result in positive changes that enhance the inclusion of all students in their schools.

TABLE 1 AN OVERVIEW OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK STORY'S SUCCESSION

- Members of the Sand Hill School's leadership invest several years effort in developing exemplary practices to meet the needs of "all" students.
- In partnership with leaders from the Institute on Community Integration, a federal grant is received in order to explore the school's endeavors to embed inclusive practices within general education reform.
- Through an attempt to assess and understand the school's endeavors, the Service Delivery Initiative – a central school initiative – is evaluated by a significant number of school staff as possessing shortcomings that have altered their commitments to this endeavor.
- The Service Delivery Initiative "fails" to sustain as a defining practice over time.
- Analysis and reflection of this challenging experience leads to the development of the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*.
- Through Sand Hill School's Site Plan process, the Interactive Communication Initiative is implemented, providing one example of how components of the framework can be utilized.
- Through this monograph, this grant project seeks to provide a process intended to inform the implementation and maintenance of inclusive practices within school settings.

AUTHORS OF THE REPORT

The school-district colleagues (Bonner, Koch, Nordness, and Taylor) and university colleagues (Abery, Fossum, Montie, and Vandercook) together formed the core team whose learning is represented within this monograph. With the grant completed, we no longer operate as a core team. Yet, we each continue to work on school reform and organizational change in various capacities. Feedback from the readers is welcome. To facilitate such interaction, the following information about the authors is provided:

- **Brian Abery** is a project director and principal investigator on a number of grants at the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration. Dr. Abery's work emphasizes the study and support of factors that enhance the self-determination of children, teenagers, and adults with disabilities. He can be reached at:
  Institute on Community Integration, University of Minnesota
  111 Pattee Hall, 150 Pillsbury Drive SE
  Minneapolis, MN 55455
  phone: (612)625-5592
- **Mike Bonner** is a school psychologist on leave from the Hopkins School District, completing his Ph.D. at the University of Cincinnati. He can be reached at:
  School Psychology Program, University of Cincinnati
  522 Teachers College
  P.O. Box 210002
  Cincinnati, OH 45221-0002
  phone: (513)556-3334, fax: (513)556-3898
  email: *bonner@email.uc.edu*

- **Paul Fossum** is Assistant Professor of Education Foundations at the University of Michigan's Dearborn campus. Dr. Fossum is available at:

  226 School of Education
  University of Michigan-Dearborn
  4901 Evergreen Road
  Dearborn, MI 48128-1491
  phone: (313)593-0982, fax: (313)593-9961
  email: pfossum@umich.edu

- **Tom Koch** is an inclusion facilitator/special education consultant (and at time of press, a general education classroom teacher) in the Hopkins School District 270. Tom is completing his Ed.D. at the University of St. Thomas in Educational Leadership. He can be reached at:

  Hopkins School District
  1001 Highway 7
  Hopkins, MN 55305
  email: *tom_koch@hopkins.k12.mn.us*

- **Jo Montie** continues her work in understanding and facilitating the development of communities and relationships of respect, collaboration, and inquiry, now in the form of being an "at-home" parent and community volunteer. Jo can be reached at (612)781-3668.

- **Kurt Nordness** is a principal in the Hopkins School District. His leadership emphasizes shared decision-making, respect, and interactive communication among staff, students, families, and community members. Kurt can be reached at *kurt_nordness@hopkins.k12.mn.us*.

- **Pam Taylor** wears many hats including that of being a parent of three boys, and has worked extensively with the school systems at encouraging home-school-community partnerships. She may be reached through email at *ptaylor406@aol.com*.

- **Terri Vandercook** is a faculty member in the School of Education, Special Education Department, at the University of St. Thomas. Dr. Vandercook has worked extensively with educators and family members to create more inclusive school communities and also teaches graduate courses that emphasize a collaborative, inclusive approach to meeting student needs. Terri can be reached at:

  University of St. Thomas
  2115 Summit Ave. CHC 131
  St. Paul, MN 55105-1096
  phone: (651)962-5389, fax: (651)962-5169
  email: *tlvandercook@stthomas.edu*

CHAPTER 1

SETTING THE STAGE: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK AND OUR LEARNING EXPERIENCES

TERRI VANDERCOOK
JO MONTIE
TOM KOCH
MIKE BONNER

This chapter begins with an introduction to the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*, a model that promotes attention to social factors that can contribute to sustained investment in school reform. The chapter then presents a description of the federally-funded grant that supported the development of this framework. This grant and the people associated with it provided the catalyst for the learning reflected in this monograph. The chapter ends with a brief sampling of significant themes informing our view of influences that impact school change. This forecasting of certain themes will assist the reader in better understanding our story as it unfolds and to stimulate further inquiry.

THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION FOR COLLECTIVE INVESTMENT

The Shared Responsibility Framework contributes to theoretical conceptions of change processes in education by orientating stakeholders towards interactions that effect the *investment* of community members in school reform. Investment here refers to the identification, ownership, and resolve that a person or group feels toward a given change. A community member who is invested in a given initiative cares about it and works toward the goals and evolving practices in support of the effort. Investment suggests a certain affinity held by a community member toward an endeavor. Investment therefore contributes a kind of personal relevance that is necessary in order to maintain a community member's commitment or collective action when the struggles occur that are typical of most improvement efforts. Investment is reflected in the relationships and partnerships that underlie reform. In order for a practice and direction to sustain, schools need stakeholders who feel an ongoing sense of empowerment in change processes. The model presented here places a premium on monitoring, understanding, and attending to people's investment.

The Shared Responsibility Framework emphasizes people and their engagement in a reform effort by highlighting critical areas that require attention as the members of a school community initiate and work toward change within a school. Just as change occurring within an organization creates a "new" organization, change occurring within a specific initiative as it is implemented creates a "new" initiative. The framework helps provide a way to reflect upon this complex process as well as anticipate ways to make it more manageable. The framework can serve an organization in two ways: (a) by providing some means of predicting challenges and proactively responding to these challenges, and (b) by providing the people involved in an initiative a way of reflecting on

circumstances that arise in order to understand alternative perspectives and to respond more constructively and with greater sensitivity. Predictive uses of the framework assist in planning and forecasting actions that sustain the engagement of people involved in change. The framework, for instance, supports administrators and other school leaders in making informed decisions regarding where and how to focus organizational energy and resources. Reflective use of the framework helps members to guide observations and learning from the complex experiences involved in authentic reform struggles. For example, a community may examine how resources have been used to support a particular initiative and, based upon this inquiry, determine that alterations are necessary. These alterations, in turn, can potentially affect several areas including the scope of the practice, the focus of skill development, and the arrangement and allocation of responsibilities.

Predictive and reflective purposes are not mutually exclusive and, in fact, the Shared Responsibility Framework is most effectively utilized with both ends in mind at once. Chapter Four provides an in-depth description of the framework, and Chapter Seven provides a tool meant to support the generation of predictive and reflective uses of the model that are discerning of each reader's context.

THE GRANT: ANTICIPATED GOALS, PROCESSES, AND PEOPLE INVOLVED

The Shared Responsibility Framework and the learning that surrounded its development grew from experiences supported by a federal grant project entitled the Shared Responsibility Project. This section includes an overview of the grant's conceptualization and background on the grant's core team.

The Shared Responsibility Project, referred to as "the grant" throughout the remainder of the monograph, was a collaborative effort of the Institute on Community Integration at the University of Minnesota, and Sand Hill School (a pseudonym for a particular school). This federally-funded grant was offered under the category of "Including Students with Disabilities in General Education Reform" and intended to support schools that were experiencing some success in inclusive practices, to solidify these practices, and to aid in the design of strategies for sharing successful approaches with other schools throughout the country. Sand Hill School had demonstrated a commitment to the inclusion of students with disabilities as active participants and learners in age-appropriate general education classrooms, and dedication by school leaders to the goal of infusing this philosophy and practice into the overall mission of the school community.

The grant goals as initially conceived included the following: the further enhancement and sustaining of inclusive education at Sand Hill School; the description and packaging of strategies designed for including students with disabilities; the further description and packaging of strategies for infusing these inclusive practices into the overall philosophy of the school community; and the sharing of these approaches with other schools. Although change was referenced as a process and not an event to "do" (Fullan, 1991), the grant proposal also projected what *might* occur over a four-year period in order to realize such goals. For example, the grant emphasized a participatory, action-research orientation to school improvement. In addition, the projected change process incorporated many best practices – practices and strategies supported by research and literature – related to school change and inclusive education specifically. And, although the specific ways to enable, enhance, and study change were to be developed over time in collaboration with members of the Sand Hill school community, the proposal *hypothetically* described strategic phases to the change process.

Shared Responsibility's work involved several work groups and teams that met over the course of the grant. Members of the grant's so called core team wrote the grant proposal, and envisioned themselves as offering additional support and leadership with Sand Hill School's inclusive education and school restructuring efforts. The core team consisted of four school district personnel including a school administrator, a parent of several children in the school district including one child with identified special needs at Sand Hill, and four university colleagues whose work on inclusive education at Sand Hill for several years prior to the grant provided a natural extension of the collaboration that occurred in the grant. It is the core team's perspective that is reflected within this monograph. For the remainder of the monograph, "grant team" and "core team" should be considered synonymous.

The core team was committed to supporting the school in furthering its vision of inclusive education and belonging. And the team believed in participatory, collaborative change in contrast to a top-down, uni-directional change process. The core team represented a range of skills, capacities, and learning styles. For example, several of the university colleagues and school district personnel were recognized leaders in the area of inclusive education. The "seasoned" parent member held numerous experiences with district and building-level committees and change initiatives. The team included evaluation and research expertise in both qualitative and quantitative approaches. All team members had school leadership experience and theoretical knowledge about school reform.

In the fall of 1993, the grant initiative formally began. There was an assumption, sometimes made explicit and sometimes left tacit, that the grant would assist the school in studying and describing ways that inclusive education was already a part of their school restructuring efforts and would also assist the school in furthering their inclusive vision and practices. During the first year of the grant, members of the core team made some discoveries about a prior inclusive education initiative, the Service Delivery Initiative. As mentioned, learning about the challenges associated with this particular initiative – together with the grant team's related struggles as a new initiative in the school – became a catalyst for much learning and eventually became a catalyst for the Shared Responsibility Framework described here.

LEARNING REFLECTED WITHIN OUR CUMULATIVE EXPERIENCE

A brief portrayal of the significant themes that emerged from our four-plus year inquiry together provides illustrations that resonate with the complexity that school change efforts beget. This complexity has suggested to the core team in part that a dynamic and context-sensitive approach to reform must include both personal and collective orientations. Following this presentation of several themes, the ensuing chapters will provide a more in-depth description about lessons that have emerged from the Shared Responsibility experience, and about the implications of these lessons for sustaining the investments of community members in school improvement.

LEARNING TO LEARN FROM FAILURES

The members of the grant team by no means expected that the school improvement efforts envisioned within the grant's description would be straightforward, easy, or conflict free. But the relatively step-wise plan with which the grant undertook its work reflected the grant team's expectation that things would be *somewhat* predictable. Yet, as the following chapters will show, the description of the learning that occurred as a result of efforts to strengthen and continue specific inclusive practices at Sand Hill School is *not* the somewhat rosy, somewhat logical, and

somewhat linear process that was predicted as the grant was conceptualized and written. The complexity involved in enhancing and sustaining an investment in change, in short, proved to be greater than anticipated, and Chapters Two and Three describe in detail some of the honest, real-world struggles experienced by the grant and the Sand Hill School community.

The school struggled, for instance, in efforts to sustain people's energy and commitment regarding a particular initiative that had been a symbolic focus of the school's innovative inclusive practices. Moreover, the grant team struggled as their attempt to understand and influence the school's innovative practices involving the inclusion of children with disabilities as a part of broader systemic restructuring floundered. Failure, frustration, and conflict are espoused to be natural byproducts of change (Fullan, 1996; Patterson, 1993). Failure is often a part of the process school's experience as they work to solve school problems (Goens, 1998). Yet, conflict and failure need not be "fatal" to an initiative, and are more productively viewed as an important form of feedback. This feedback, in turn, provides means for "learning to learn" from our so-called failures and conflicts and for moving less fearfully toward the unknown, for accepting the messiness of change efforts, and for coping with failure through renewed and revised efforts.

Thus, an appraisal that the Service Delivery Initiative at Sand Hill School failed is asserted. This assessment continues to provoke much emotion and sensitivity. Still, through a severe look at the challenges experienced much can be learned. As an example of this temperament toward learning, members of the Sand Hill School remain focused on growth. While the Service Delivery Initiative did not sustain, the community persists in its pursuit of inclusive practices and their school improvement journey continues.

NOTICING, NAMING, AND UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT

Change agents who find themselves in the thick of strife do not normally recognize either that conflict is indeed a natural by-product of change nor that conflict might most productively be viewed as an important form of feedback (Patterson, 1993). Instead, there is a desire to ignore, manage, or control the conflict, or even to pretend that it doesn't exist. But attempts to address conflict through these typical ways of managing, controlling, or ignoring often lead to a sense of exclusion among those participating in an effort to enact positive changes. This, in turn, inevitably leads to the *dis*investment of those involved from the change effort at hand (Tjosvold, 1993). This kind of disinvestment is a huge price to pay – one that can often result in the failure of the positive changes envisioned to ever truly take root in the long term. Experience and analysis here will suggest that people involved in complex change initiatives, instead of trying to manage and control a change process and the inevitable struggles and conflicts to which their efforts will give rise, should instead keep a strong emphasis upon recognizing and responding to conflict. The useful skills of noticing and responding to conflict – skills that can serve to make change more manageable rather than to control and manage the change per se – therefore warrant some introduction here. The uses and benefits of these skills are then further illuminated in Chapters Three, Four, and Five.

Conflicts come in many forms and degrees, and, as mentioned, people respond to them in many ways (Bauwens & Hourcade, 1995; Friend & Cook, 1996; Johnson, 1990). Some responses to conflict contribute to people staying engaged in a change process. Other responses may erode their investment in a process either slowly or relatively quickly. Identification and acknowledgment of a conflict is a critical first step in actively choosing new responses to the discord: learning to notice and understand the seeds of conflict is critical. In seeking to understand conflict as it occurs and to respond to it more productively, the grant team has developed some common vocabulary that keys

on the image of a negotiation table: Conflicts mishandled are usually either placed "under the table" or are allowed to "break the table," but, when handled more productively, conflicts can be "put on the table" in a manageable form.

To explore this imagery and vocabulary further, conflict kept "under the table" is one that is ignored or otherwise avoided. People reacting to a conflict in this way may be aware of the conflict, even "stubbing their toes" on it as they keep it hidden from public view. Yet nobody explicitly talks about the conflict. In these cases, the minds of the people at the table are at least partially focused upon things like: "I don't agree with the direction this is heading," or "It is not worth raising objections. Her mind is made up," or "This is ridiculous! How could they possibly think we can do this? We don't have the knowledge or experience to pull this off," or "Who is responsible for this child's curriculum? I sure don't know what it should be." With these kinds of thoughts in the air, how invested are people in staying at the table in order to continue propelling an initiative toward common goals? Not very. Typically, participants probably just want to leave the table – to disengage from the initiative. They are not apt to be very excited about returning.

Conflict can "break the table" when people respond to differences in perspective by pointing fingers in blame, by stating things in non-negotiable ways, by digging deeper into their own positions, and by not seeking to understand other viewpoints. At times, table-breaking is easy to see. There are clues to observe as the conflict and people's behavior escalate. There might be interruptions, verbal attacks or people actually leaving the group. At other times, the table seems to break quite suddenly from a comment that appears to come "out of the blue." Perhaps a group or individual finally tries to address a conflict that has been brewing under the table by bringing it out from under and placing it on the table, inadvertently breaking the table. A vicious cycle emerges, as negative table-breaking experiences can cause people to keep conflicts under the table lest they inadvertently introduce a new table-breaking episode. Eventually the conflict at hand will build to a point where it has to be dealt with, but then again, it is allowed to break the table through mishandling. Again, a common result of a table-breaking incident is that people leave the table for another, seeking new relationships and blaming their negative experience on the people with whom they were involved.

Or conflict can be more openly acknowledged – put on the negotiating table. When conflicts are dealt with openly in this way, the table remains standing, and people continue to work together toward common goals. Patterson (1993) has described how capacity for true change comes from going beyond surface harmony and seeking the tensions that comes with the struggle of new learning. The experiences of the Shared Responsibility grant team have underscored the importance not only of acknowledging conflict as a natural part of change, but also of keeping conflict on the table, of understanding and recognizing frustration and disagreement as common by-products of conflict, and, based upon these efforts to attune to conflict, of addressing it more effectively. In short, the goal of using conflict productively is one of seeking to place the conflict on the table in a manageable form.

EXAMINING THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN WHAT WE SAY AND OUR DEEPER BELIEFS AND HABITS

The grant team has experienced repeated lessons – both in the course of direct participation in leadership roles in an initiative, and in more indirect roles as observers of other initiatives – regarding the struggle between what people say and what we *really* believe, feel, and do. While people might advocate collaboration and shared responsibility, blaming and finger-pointing can remain a persistent challenge. While it is not unusual to espouse a claim that conflict is an

opportunity, experiences may continue to reinforce running from conflict or becoming defensive. Further, parents are referred to as valued partners within school improvement enterprises, yet practices and beliefs often contribute to parents' experiencing feelings of exclusion and alienation. And while change is espoused as a dynamic and complex process that can not be prescribed, over and over it remains tempting to undertake actions that seek to control, predict, and manage change.

Although there are numerous explanations that shed light on discrepancies between what people say and what they do and believe, Osterman and Kottkamp's (1993) discussion of *personal action theories* is particularly useful in illustrating a linkage between this phenomenon and organizational change. Covey (1989) has referred to the similar construct of *paradigms* and Senge (1990) to *mental models*. According to Osterman and Kottkamp, a personal action theory is an idea or belief held about how something should or does work. "Educators hold personal action theories about such things as how teaching should work, how students should learn, how meetings should run, how the classrooms should operate, and how principals should lead" (Montie, York-Barr, & Kronberg, 1998, p. 17). School leaders hold personal action theories about supporting change, the roles that parents should play, signs of effective change, and the meaning and nature of conflict. Personal action theories consciously and unconsciously influence and guide one's behavior, which in turn influences organizational outcomes.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) further distinguish between two types of personal action theories. *Espoused theories* can be articulated because they develop and exist at a more conscious level. Members of a leadership team, for example, may state their beliefs in facilitating participatory change and in working in partnership with all stakeholders. A school may identify unconditional belonging for each person as one of their core values. *Theories-in-use*, in contrast, are more difficult to identify because they are embedded within our culture, experiences, and habits. Theories-in-use can be identified by observing personal or organizational behaviors and then examining these for "clues" about deeper assumptions held. In building upon Argyris and Schön's (1974) work, Osterman and Kottkamp have suggested that implicit theories-in-use are difficult to identify, difficult to change, and more powerful than espoused theory in influencing actions and behaviors.

In order to change and improve on one's practice and, in turn, to influence organizational outcomes, a deeper understanding of one's theories-in-use is required. Chapter Three's analysis of the Service Delivery Initiative at Sand Hill School identifies some assumptions, deeper beliefs, and community habits – in other words, some theories-in-use – that the grant team and initiative leaders held about leadership and school change. Chapter Six and Seven suggest several ways to use the Shared Responsibility Framework to uncover espoused theories and theories-in-use to promote new habits of directness and overtness in communication.

ACKNOWLEDGING CHAOS, CONFUSION AND THE SWAMP

The preceding discussion has described the difficulty and the value of learning from mistakes. As people seek to make lasting change within schools, plenty of confusion and a plethora of mistakes are bound to arise. A growing body of literature addresses this complexity and confusion, and a variety of disciplines and perspectives provide a convergent orientation – one that emphasizes contextual nuances, contradictions, and ambiguity as a part of working toward systemic change.

The "new sciences" utilizing sources such as chaos theory, quantum mechanics, and complexity theory encourage a different view of schools and systemic change. This perspective suggests that both chaos and order occur simultaneously (Wheatley, 1992). Translating some of the principles of nonlinear change to the school context, Garmston and Wellman (1997) seek to help school members create "adaptive schools" that have changing form yet consistent direction and function.

They propose organizational and professional development approaches that reflect a belief that each element and factor at play in an organizational environment influences everything else, yet without the cause-and-effect sequential order to proposed change processes and content. These nonlinear principles also acknowledge the lack of a direct relationship between more information and effective decisions: More data, that is, does not necessarily lead to better outcomes. Thus, from this perspective, complexity and chaos should be anticipated as a significant part of the work of organizational reform.

Schön (1987) has looked at schools through the lens of teaching and professional practice. His metaphor of *the swamp* refers to the significant, complex, and messy real-world problems that teachers face. Answers to such problems that emerge from the swamp can not be prescribed in a book; rather, responses need to be identified and tested within a specific school context. Schön has contrasted the swamp with the "high hard ground" – with the type of problems that can be solved by "applying theory and technique derived from systematic, preferably scientific knowledge" (Schön, 1987, p.3-4). Schall (1995) expanded the discussion by showing how the swamp applies to leadership and public policy work as well, in arenas such as addressing racism, achieving social justice, and working toward economic equity.

After viewing school reform from the high hard ground, grant team members eventually benefitted from viewing their school change effort through more of a "swamp-lens." As the team moved first from acknowledging the swamp and chaos to eventually (if somewhat reluctantly) respecting it, they began ultimately to embrace it and learn from it. Once we critically challenged our "prescribed-solutions" approach, our experiences and examinations grew. Yet in this challenge, we discovered the need for a configuration that balanced structure and construction, recognizing the inconsistencies of acknowledging and living in chaos.

SUMMARY

In sum, this monograph presents a view from the swamp of school reform, interpreting experiences and suggesting means to reconcile proactive strategies such as strategic planning with responsive evolvement and discovering the nature of social systems. Experiences gained during the course of the Shared Responsibility grant project have compelled us to learn from mistakes, miscommunications, and misunderstandings. We have learned about attending to conflict and different ways of comprehending and responding to the requisite struggles in reform. We've learned about ourselves, struggling to recognize deeply entrenched habits and beliefs about school change, leadership, and organization. Yes, we've fallen into the swamp and become drenched in its complexity. The *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* grew out of these perplexing but rewarding experiences.

CHAPTER 2

BEGINNING THE STORY: THE EVOLUTION OF A PROMISING YET UNSUSTAINED INITIATIVE

TOM KOCH
JO MONTIE
MIKE BONNER

There are many examples of educational reform efforts whose promises have not been fulfilled (Fullan, 1993; Maxcy, 1991). But analysis in the literature on educational reform provides a relatively limited view of actual unsuccessful reforms – efforts whose shortcomings, presumably, lead to the comparative wealth of theories about how to improve reform. As a consequence, the means for understanding the fragility of failed initiatives are incomplete, and the opportunity to learn from these experiences in order to improve future school innovations likelihood for success is therefore hampered. This chapter seeks to respond to that shortage of information and to share some observations and questions about enhancing the prospects for sustained school reform; it does so by looking at a five-year period in the life of Sand Hill School, and, in particular, by describing the school's inclusive educational reform called the Service Delivery Initiative. Although the focus of the Service Delivery Initiative reform effort was clearly in the realm of inclusive education, the experiences encountered in this initiative should be of value to those engaged in reform efforts in general, not merely to those whose focus is inclusive practices originating from special education.

The story of inclusive education reform at Sand Hill School is the tale of a promising and yet incomplete school improvement effort. Many of the school's overall inclusive education efforts were built on a strong foundation of child-focused thinking and were guided by educational best practice and solid organizational theory. The Service Delivery Initiative became the most prominent of the school's reform efforts in the arena of inclusive education. Members of Sand Hill School community were motivated and skilled, and the school was exemplary in several dimensions. In short, the initiative had a lot of things going for it. Yet, the investment of those involved in the Service Delivery Initiative was not sustained, and this effort was therefore a failure in this most crucial respect.

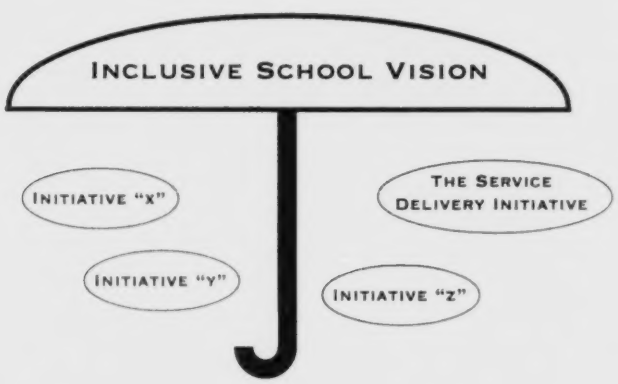
A positive outcome of the Service Delivery Initiative, nonetheless, is that analysis and reflection on the effort served as the genesis of the Shared Responsibility Framework, which is described in detail in Chapter Four of this monograph. The history and contextual details surrounding the Service Delivery Initiative (the focus of this chapter) will therefore assist the reader in better understanding and using the Shared Responsibility Framework. This contextual description will reveal some of the Service Delivery Initiative's considerable complexity, and will help readers to make linkages between this story and their own experiences with the struggle of school reform. With this prospect in mind, readers are requested to suspend evaluation and judgment as they read this chapter; doing so will facilitate their understanding of the chapter's retrospective accounting and of the development of the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* as a tool for more effective responses to the challenges described here.

In order to represent the Service Delivery Initiative within the broader context of inclusive educational reform, this chapter begins with a description of some of the recent history at Sand Hill School, specifically, between 1989 and 1994. The chapter will then consider the development of the Service Delivery Initiative within this inclusive education reform in light of common frameworks of organizational change (Bolman & Deal, 1997). These frameworks demonstrate retroactive endorsement of many of the decisions about how this reform was introduced and promoted overtime. The chapter concludes by describing how the Service Delivery Initiative was perceived by Sand Hill teachers during the 1993-94 school year, and by summarizing how the school and the grant's action-research team responded to these perceptions. Within this chapter, as is true throughout the monograph, the term *initiative* is intended to designate specific school practices and efforts; *reform*, in contrast, is intended to refer to a broader overarching change that includes a variety of initiatives. The term *service delivery* here refers to an array of educational strategies, approaches, and structures that were conceived in order to address the unique learning needs of Sand Hill students.

HISTORY OF INITIATIVES CONNECTED TO THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REFORM

Between 1989 and 1994, numerous initiatives and strategies were implemented at Sand Hill School as a part of the school's reform efforts. The majority of these initiatives were aligned to a central vision that promoted the development of an inclusive school community – that is, of an environment seeking to address the learning needs of "all" students, including those with disabilities. Although the school principal was the most visible promoter of this vision, a significant number of parents, a core staff leadership group, and a large number of school staff also advanced the vision of Sand Hill as an inclusive community. Initiatives under this reform were centered largely upon reconfiguring special education and other services in order to better support all students in their general education classrooms. The reform effort was, by design, consistent with the vision and the current expressed goals and projects of Sand Hill's district administration. The Service Delivery Initiative itself was key among a variety of initiatives (Figure 2.1) that were designed to represent tangible practices that would respond to the leadership's inclusive vision.

FIGURE 2.1 THE SERVICE DELIVERY INITIATIVE AS ONE OF SEVERAL SAND HILL SCHOOL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVES



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Following a detailed description of the Service Delivery Initiative, which will illuminate the intentions of the Service Delivery Initiative more fully, a brief timeline of various events and actions will reveal the progression of certain factors that contributed to the Service Delivery Initiative's more formal establishment in the third year of the overall inclusive reform effort.

THE SERVICE DELIVERY INITIATIVE

Sand Hill School's Service Delivery Initiative, as mentioned, involved a set of problem-solving and decision-making formats that were intended to support the Sand Hill staff and parents in their efforts to respond to the unique learning needs of the school's students. One of the major objectives of this initiative was to institute a *flexible* support system that could emphasize classroom-based instruction – in other words, to create a system to help all students succeed in general education environments. In an attempt to address unique needs, including those of the students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), this inclusive approach to service delivery involved both direct services (such as additional adults to help provide instruction that was more individualized) and indirect services (for instance, consultation provided to classroom staff regarding alternative instructional ideas).

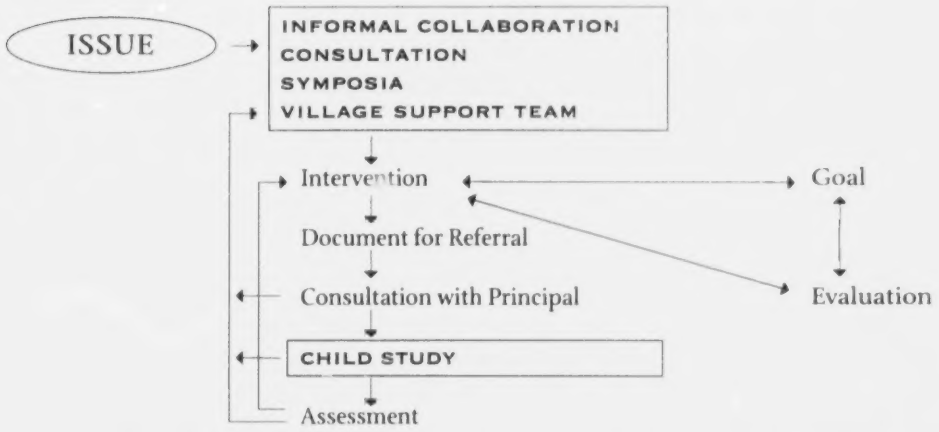
Several core values guided and shaped the development of the Service Delivery Initiative: embracing individualized child-centered approaches, adhering to a problem-solving orientation, and fostering collaboration among adults – both staff members and parents. A decision-making process was designed to encourage adults to develop student interventions. The process consisted of informal and formal meetings, individual and group consultation, and collegial as well as administrative collaboration. These changes, not surprisingly, demanded the development of new roles for general education and special education teachers alike, and also necessitated the forging of new relationships among staff members. In addition, the changes envisioned had significant implications regarding increasing the involvement of parents in various decision-making processes.

As the conception of the process took shape, the Service Delivery Initiative was eventually represented as a flowchart (Figure 2.2). The flowchart – a visual representation of the Service Delivery Initiative process – illustrated the initiative's five main problem-solving and decision-making venues: *informal collaboration*, *consultation*, *symposia*, the *Village Support Team*, and the *Child Study Team*. These five elements were designed to provide alternative formats that were suited to the different learning and teaming styles of the adults requesting student support, to provide direction to participants through a formative and reiterative intervention design process, and to foster supportive collegial interaction. Although a key concern that guided the initiative's conception was that parents should be full beneficiaries of, and participants in, the flowchart procedures, it is interesting that, as the history presented in this chapter will suggest, the focus was primarily directed to school staff. It is also noteworthy that a second key concern was that the five Service Delivery Initiative formats should enhance a flexible and a circular schema for intervention, but that the flowchart appears hierarchical in its visual organization.

Each of the five flowchart elements is described in some detail as follows:

- **INFORMAL COLLABORATION.** Informal collaboration within the Service Delivery Initiative conception occurred when a staff member or parent informally engaged with one or more adults around any issue. Such collaborative relationships functioned as an entrance into the problem-solving activities of the flowchart: encouraging people to share ideas, plan activities, exchange lesson plans, teach in teams, and/or cooperate in implementing support strategies – all these approaches built upon the flowchart's focus on partnership. Supportive interaction, in short, was to be a hallmark of the system that the flowchart depicted.

FIGURE 2.2 THE FLOWCHART DEPICTING THE SERVICE DELIVERY INITIATIVE'S FIVE MAIN PROBLEM-SOLVING AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT VENUES



- **CONSULTATION.** The consultation process represented another level of intensity of the flowchart's support structures. Consultation about a student issue began with an individual seeking ideas from another individual perceived as having pertinent expertise or capacity. The intent of indirect assistance in developing and structuring an intervention plan was to supply new approaches and perspectives to help a particular student learn. At this level in the flowchart – the level of initiating an instructional response – consultation remained informal and oriented toward the exchange of skills (Dettmer, Dyck, & Thurston, 1996).

- **SYMPOSIA.** The symposium, one of two group-configured problem solving processes, delineated yet another avenue of support. A symposium was a meeting (or a series of meetings) for considering student concerns; symposia had flexible formats, and membership of these meetings was established through consultation between the building principal and the adult initiating a request for support. These informal teams offered opportunities for engaging in open-structured information gathering and problem exploration with a highly adaptable potential of methods for moving forward. The open-structure and membership features were designed to make symposia a more immediate and responsive planning process.

- **THE VILLAGE SUPPORT TEAM.** The second of the two major group processes within the Service Delivery Initiative's scheme – the Village Support Team meetings – entailed a more prescribed team whose charge was to furnish classroom teachers with special assistance. A standing representative group of general and special education staff met on a regular basis to support colleagues who identified the need for help. Although the content of the meetings would vary greatly due to the range of concerns at hand, the format and process of the meetings were highly structured. This team used timed and sequenced problem-solving questions to address student issues that the staff identified. The more structured quality of both the membership and the meetings was designed to provide a consistent and predictable format for planning and action. Both symposia and the Village Support Team emphasized indirect interventions, although at such meetings the team frequently adopted direct support strategies that had a more limited duration.

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- **CHILD STUDY TEAM.** Sand Hill School's Child Study Team was a multidisciplinary evaluation team process and represented the final component of the Service Delivery Initiative flowchart. This team of special education staff specifically focused on determining whether a student was eligible for due-processed-defined special education services. The same special education staff also typically participated in the other flowchart services, but did this without needing to *formally* identify (that is, to "label") a student as having special education needs. By contrast, the Child Study Team conducted a formal assessment and then determined a student's eligibility for services based upon interpretation of the assessment results. If a student became eligible for special education services, an Individual Educational Program (IEP) was developed to address specific needs in the least restrictive environment and to formalize previously developed support strategies. The general education classroom continued as the primary context for service delivery. These services represented formal intervention efforts, but collaborative teaming and a flexible definition of roles (i.e., role exchange and shared tasks) continued as the defining focus. If a student was determined to be ineligible for an IEP, the issues would be addressed by recycling through to one of the other flowchart processes.

In conjunction with these problem-solving structures – informal collaboration, consultation, symposia, the Village Support Team, and the Child Study Team – another important component of the flowchart was *consultation with the principal*. Before any referral was passed on to the Child Study Team, the school principal first reviewed the case with the referring teacher. This step was meant to ensure that the previous intervention attempts had been thoroughly implemented and given a reasonable duration to determine effects. And, although more formal, this review was consistent with the state general education regulations requiring two prior interventions prior to referral for special education eligibility consideration.

In sum, the description above reflects the intent and purpose of the Service Delivery Initiative: meeting the needs of "all" students – even in cases where a student's needs weren't sufficient to satisfy legal requirements regarding eligibility for special education services. The preceding description of the initiative and its five major elements could not have been articulated as such during the first years of inclusive education reform at Sand Hill. Instead, as the narrative in the next section will confirm, the service delivery model and the flowchart that eventually emerged to illustrate that process, developed over time.

A TIMELINE OF REFORM EFFORTS AT SAND HILL

The various events and activities that this section describes will show how Sand Hill School sought to move toward its vision of an inclusive school community through work within the Service Delivery Initiative process. This description is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to convey key efforts supporting the Service Delivery Initiative and the interrelated inclusive reform efforts.

In 1989-90, the school began slowly initiating the inclusion of students with disabilities (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hall & Hord, 1987): children previously educated in specialized educational settings were included as participating members in the school's kindergarten classrooms. The intent was that this inclusive innovation would gradually grow as the children progressed through the system. The further hope was that this incremental approach would allow staff, over time, to become skilled and comfortable. Staff development efforts during this period supported the community in its creation and nurturing of a common vocabulary, its identification of common ground, and its collective movement in a common direction (Senge, 1990). Additionally, some

leaders of this initiative recognized that the shift toward inclusive service delivery would require access to specialized resources and expertise, and the school formed a relationship with several individuals from the University of Minnesota, whose grounding in inclusive methods addressed this need. The university colleagues collaborated with the school in identifying best-practice strategies associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities in the general education classrooms of their neighborhood schools (Stainback & Stainback, 1990).

The following year, 1990-91, school-wide staff development focused upon student-centered decision making (Dettmer et al. 1996; Friend & Cook, 1996; Rainforth & York-Barr, 1997; Stainback & Stainback, 1996). These student-centered decision-making efforts were aimed at more effectively supporting the inclusion of students with disabilities (for instance, expanding classroom adaptation strategies, planning collaboratively with parents, and overtly connecting student needs to inclusive service delivery). Concurrently, school leaders began to perceive a need for a formal problem-solving process that went beyond the state-mandated multidisciplinary special education team identification process (Vaughn, Bos, & Shay Schumann, 1997). Sand Hill School continued to cultivate its capacity for supporting all children by strengthening already-existing resources within the building. The school also continued to reach toward new partnerships and practices.

During the third year, 1991-92, a series of actions further defined and expanded the inclusive education initiatives. Additional staff development work continued to emphasize student-centered decision-making. Staff members engaged in informal discussions about identifying specific responsibilities and duties related to students' instructional needs (Friend & Cook, 1996; Hoskins, 1996; Mitchell, 1990). The school began to expand its functional definition of a "student support team" to include any adult who played a significant role in the student's life; this definition contrasted with narrower definitions that might encompass the immediate school staff alone. Thus, parents and community members became collaborators in various school activities. Examples of this kind of involvement include co-participation in school-sponsored workshops, governance, and recreational activities. Further examples of the school's expanding cooperative emphasis was the content of its mission statement (see Figure 2.3) and related goals, which reflected a child-centered vision and recognized an active role for every community member. The

FIGURE 2.3 THE SAND HILL SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT DEVELOPED DURING THE 1991-92 SCHOOL YEAR

THE MISSION STATEMENT OF SAND HILL SCHOOL

We the students, parents, and teachers of Sand Hill School share the responsibility for the students' education.

Our goals are to:

- ✔ Bring out each student's highest academic potential
- ✔ Celebrate every student's talents, abilities, and achievement
- ✔ Encourage curiosity and enthusiasm for learning
- ✔ Act respectfully
- ✔ Develop individual responsibility

African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," became a slogan that represented the cooperative environment that the leaders were pursuing.

At this point in the evolution of the Service Delivery Initiative, the initiative's leaders held growing confidence in the school's ability and willingness to utilize a collaborative service delivery structure to meet the needs of all children. Due to this confidence, the principal, the special education coordinator, the district inclusion facilitator, and the school psychologist introduced the flowchart (refer back to Figure 2.2) to the school community. Over the course of the year, the initiative's leadership expanded to include the school's Inclusion Committee and other interested staff.

During the 1992-93 school year the leadership further promoted and expanded the Service Delivery Initiative. The initiative's linkages with additional integral committees expanded. These leaders looked for and encouraged activities that would expand the school's capacities to use and sustain an inclusive service delivery approach. The plan promoted the central role of the general education classroom – in collaboration with families and a range of instructional available support staff – in providing for the needs of all students. Formal staff development efforts addressed broadening instructional strategies (Algozzine, Ysseldyke, & Elliott, 1997; Falvey, 1995; Marzano, 1992).

Table 2.1 summarizes some of the significant events in the development of the Service Delivery Initiative as a part of broader inclusive educational reform efforts at Sand Hill. In large part, the community viewed the reform effort to be successful, though undergoing continual development.

In an effort to expand resources and to seek ways to further institutionalize the service delivery model, the school leadership, in collaboration with the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration, pursued a federal grant aimed at studying and supporting inclusive education. By the time the grant was awarded, the Sand Hill principal had left the school for a central administrative position in the district. But the remaining school leaders felt confident that the school would continue to develop and improve the implementation of its reforms due to the reforms central and public status. With the principal's departure, the grant became an even more important opportunity for engaging resources and expertise in support of the Service Delivery process.

Before describing the continued efforts of the school and initial efforts supported by the grant, let's further explore why Sand Hill School's reform leaders felt so confident that the initiatives would continue at the school.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY APPLIED TO THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REFORM

As Sand Hill's leaders sought to guide and support inclusive educational reform, their practice was informed by school change literature as well as their direct experiences. The leaders actively engaged in reading and applying organizational change literature from different perspectives. In their daily collaboration, the leaders shared perspectives and incorporated their knowledge through their influence in decision making about the reform process. This section represents an analysis and interpretation of how organizational change literature supports the actions and approaches that the reform leaders had taken. Specifically, the analysis examines the Service Delivery Initiative's design and implementation through Bolman and Deal's (1997) four organizational frames – the structural, human resources, political, and symbolic frames. This will illuminate some of the theoretical underpinnings, major goals, and propositions of the inclusive education reform efforts at Sand Hill School.

TABLE 2.1 TIMELINE OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THAT REFLECTED AND SHAPED THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY INITIATIVE AND AN INCLUSIVE VISION AT SAND HILL SCHOOL

1988-89 and Before: Traditional Resource Structure to Service Delivery

1989-90 School Year: Initiation of Service Model Change

- Inclusion of students with significant disabilities in kindergarten began at Sand Hill School.
- Open forums occurred to encourage staff discussion of the changing service delivery model, one that emphasized a shift in location of services.
- Connections with the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration established as a way to use "best practice" resources in inclusive education.
- A building-level staff development initiative with the Adler Institute occurred as a way to create more of shared perspective about student behavior.
- Classroom-based special education service delivery began; dual systems in place.

1990-91 School Year: Expanding Efforts

- Building-level Inclusion Committee began with an initial focus on dissemination of information related to Service Delivery Initiative.
- Began to more formally define a vision of student-centered, decision-making processes.
- Student service teams included multi-disciplinary membership.
- Building-level staff development efforts focused on expanding the special education support that included an emphasis upon parents' experiences and modification strategies.
- Village Resource Support Team (Instructional Assistance Team) established, offering a problem solving structure available for addressing the needs of "all" students.
- Summer Training with the Institute and State Department of Education occurred as a way to build internal leadership capacity.

1991-92 School Year: Actions to Further Define and Develop Service Model

- Co-sponsored a statewide workshop on Inclusion with Marsha Forest and Jack Pearpoint as primary presenters.
- Concept of staff development broadened to include a collaborative focus through trainings offered to both parents and teachers.
- School mission statement developed with goals that reflect child-centered and team collaboration philosophies.
- Service Delivery Flowchart developed, which formally articulated Service Delivery Initiative components.
- Child Study process refined to develop more flexible team composition consistent with identified student needs as established through the problem-solving processes.

1992-93 School Year: Schoolwide Efforts Continue

- Flowchart widely used to describe the Service Delivery Initiative.
- Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (SEED) staff development initiated.
- School and Community in Partnership (SCIP) formed that included the Area Family Resource Center and other community agencies to support families.
- Dimensions of Learning staff development initiated, with an emphasis upon multiple instructional strategies to meet the need of a diverse set of learners.
- Symposium problem-solving structure implemented.
- Parent participation expands as some building committees involve parents as members.
- Special education family needs survey conducted.

1993-94 School Year: Seeking Further Partnerships and Gathering Feedback

- Shared Responsibility Grant funded to further support and study the school-wide inclusive practices that connected with the school's broader inclusive reform efforts.
- New principal began at Sand Hill School.
- School-disrict sponsored Norman Kunc/Emma Vanderclift Inclusive Communities workshop brought together building-level teams that included administration, licensed staff, non-licensed staff, and families.
- Teacher interviews and support staff surveys occurred in order to evaluate the Service Delivery Model, including an evaluation of the flowchart components.
- Schoolwide family survey conducted.

STRUCTURAL ORIENTATION

A *structural* orientation to organizational management utilizes rational inquiry to clarify objectives, attend to relationships, and develop structures that efficiently reach a desired outcome (Bolman & Deal, 1997). Typical examples of structural activities, according to Bolman and Deal, include specifying school goals, establishing channels of communication, and delineating organizational configurations. These are often pursued to clarify direction and procedures. As the preceding narrative suggests, specific examples of this approach to management at Sand Hill School included utilizing a systematic approach to initiative implementation, defining problem-solving structures, encouraging classroom-based special education services, and establishing the Inclusion Committee. The flowchart itself, in fact, represents a visual illustration of attention to structural dimensions of the reform effort. As a diagram of structures and processes available for supporting inclusive service delivery, the chart depicts how assistance was dispensed cyclically to bolster efforts on behalf of all community members. The design, with its reliance on a commitment to problem solving and collaborative skills, reflected rational thinking that characterizes the structural orientation.

Also in keeping with structural orientation, the design of the Service Delivery Initiative reflects the use of vertical and lateral networking configurations – devices that promote management controls and connections with recognized school leaders. Vertical structuring is evident, for instance, in the the steering of key decisions through the building principal and in the scheduling of problem-solving forums. The Sand Hill flowchart's prominent role for the principal further exemplified how the initiative directly connected administrative attention and leadership to teacher and student concerns. Access to formal special education services was also tied to this structural design. Dornbush and Scott (1975) contend that a "hierarchy of managerial and supervisory strata" (p. 92) is intended to direct organizational operations and to coordinate practices in organizational behaviors.

Lateral structure was evident in the extensive use of committees to manage inclusive education efforts and support the flow of information-oriented communication. The Inclusion Committee at Sand Hill provided important connections between educational staff and community members. This committee, with a large representative membership, was the primary vehicle for transmitting goals, imparting information, describing problem-solving methods, and delineating service delivery structures to school community members.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION

Organizational analysis from a *political* orientation seeks to explain issues in terms of how the people involved use power to protect themselves and influence others. It is concerned with "how individuals and groups compete, and cooperate, to achieve their goals" (Blase, 1991, p.18). Interest groups create coalitions to advocate, through the perception and use of power, toward a desired outcome. "Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiating, and jockeying for position among different stakeholders" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p.163). The political orientation to the analysis of organizational behavior assumes that conflict will occur and suggests focusing on the management of these interactions. Leaders must monitor, assess, and understand their organizations' political climates in order to determine cases of opportunity and advantage, principle arenas in which organizational activity is centered, and the timing and importance of key events and activities. Within a political orientation "[t]here is no solution; there are only political tradeoffs" (Cuban, 1990, p.6).

Such an analysis, when applied to the Sand Hill context, suggests that several political strategies were utilized by the leadership team in support of the goals of the Service Delivery Initiative. At Sand Hill, the content of staff development – and the related expenditure of money in support of the inclusive Service Delivery Initiative during its initiation – provides evidence of the leadership's ability to control agenda setting and to otherwise influence the focus of the school community's attention. Political tactics often include a delegation of authority to groups appointed by organizational leaders. In the Sand Hill example, the focus and scope of the building's Inclusion Committee provides clear evidence of such delegation. The committee's membership and meeting agendas demonstrate that this committee was a significant arena for influencing actions. Leadership positions on this committee supported the maintenance of a positive focus on inclusive service delivery efforts. In the committee setting, best practices that advanced the initiative were regularly introduced and reinforced in order to influence the school staff and the larger school community. The principal's involvement on this committee and in special education eligibility decisions (such as the Child Study Team) served as a method of controlling school resources.

During the initiation and implementation stages of the inclusive Service Delivery Initiative, an apparent coalition formed among the initial service delivery leaders (the principal and three special education leaders), the special education staff, and the newer general education staff. This coalition focused upon applying inclusive educational best-practice strategies to the initiative. Supporting this coalition's power were components of the principal's supervision style. The organization of the inclusive Service Delivery Initiative leadership team aligned several resources in support of reform efforts. There was, for example, overt linkage of existing district initiatives such as the formal district mission with the Sand Hill Service Delivery Initiative: Initiative leaders endorsed the district mission statement's tenet of "valuing diversity" with their efforts to establish and nurture a relationship with the University of Minnesota's Institute on Community Integration, an institute whose dedication to diversity through inclusive educational practices was well known. This relationship with the university also became a source of information and assistance related to best practices in inclusive education, and this served to legitimize the school's efforts. This relationship further stimulated some families of students with disabilities – many of whom possessed a strong history of advocacy – to become direct participants in supporting the Sand Hill inclusive Service Delivery Initiative. Finally, the association of the initiative with existing innovations (e.g., a school-community partnership initiative) politically connected several constituencies through efforts to address the needs of all learners; this further tended to strengthen the coalition's credibility.

HUMAN RESOURCE ORIENTATION

Critics of the manipulative sides of both the political and the structural approaches perceive the *human resource* orientation to be a less cynical perspective of organizational management and behavior. Human resource activities consider the interrelationships between a reform effort and the individuals involved (Hackman & Wageman, 1995). The orientation attends to growth so that individuals find work meaningful and satisfying, and organizations get the talent and energy they need in order to succeed (McGregor, 1960). At Sand Hill School this meant a strong focus on people, specifically to advance staff skill and sophistication related to the inclusive service delivery. Summer training, collaborative partnerships with higher education, open forums, workshops, and ongoing staff development all demonstrate alertness to human resource issues.

The Service Delivery Initiative's implementation stage incorporated knowledge of current staff development strategies including significant attention to extended and multi-level instructive activities (Sparks, 1994). An illustration of the initiative's application of this practice was the

student discipline efforts affiliated with the initiative's focus. In confronting challenges associated with student behavior, the leadership team utilized an Adlerian psychology approach that emphasized creating a sense of belonging and using behavioral analysis as a foundation for training. The goals of encouraging a common language, perspective, and intervention style to support positive behavioral growth was an important focus of a year-long staff "institute" that included regular faculty meetings, written support materials, case study examination, classroom-based support, and individual interactions concerning the content.

The initiative leaders further created open forum sessions for staff to discuss inclusive service delivery and the shift in location of services. From a human resource orientation, these open forums provided the leadership with a framework for identifying concerns and proposing solutions. The forums were designed to facilitate the sharing of information and strategies as staff shifted toward a more inclusive, student-centered, classroom-based service delivery. In short, the initiative consciously sought, through training and expanded community interaction aimed at strengthening the linkage between the individual and the initiative, to tap the human resource orientation.

SYMBOLIC ORIENTATION

A *symbolic* orientation considers "meaning, belief, and faith" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p.216) as central to organizational management. Culture, tradition, and customs provide bases from which individuals and organizations can grapple with the ambiguity and complexity that a new initiative introduces. In addition to helping systems respond to ambiguity, a symbolic orientation seeks to provide the rituals, ceremonies, and stories that can reinforce essential elements of purpose and meaning.

A symbolic orientation is evidenced in the strong sense of vision and values that the initiative design embodied. The leadership's repeated reference to the goal of meeting the needs of all learners constituted a conscious effort to introduce a strong vision that might encompass the interests of an entire community. Use of the African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child," which was consistently referenced when engaging the community in school reform efforts, became a metaphor that could "compress complicated issues into understandable images, [in an attempt to] affect our attitudes, evaluation, and action" (Bolman & Deal, 1997, p. 230). The school's mission statement (refer back to Figure 2.3) identified values that reflected a child-centered orientation, and these statements therefore also supported a broad definition of and resolve toward inclusive practices. Student-centered decision-making was frequently referenced in both formal and informal communication as a support to including all students. The special education team culture inspired qualities of individualization and team collaboration. Drawing on open classroom terminology, the flowchart referenced the flexibility of instructional strategy and delivery of supports, and the leadership team members championed these values whenever components of the initiative were discussed. In short, the Service Delivery Initiative symbolized values and actions that embraced diversity and empathy, and envisioned positive outcomes and success.

Finally, the literature on the symbolic perspective stresses the importance of organizational history in management (Clark, 1975; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Weick, 1985), and for Sand Hill School, awards and community testimony became additional symbols of the strength and direction of the initiative. The school received several awards from disability advocacy groups based on the school's efforts to use collaborative problem-solving to support the growth of individual students, and these accolades further supported efforts to redefine the special education child study eligibility process, to encourage new instructional approaches, and to expand community involvement projects.

SCHOOL COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY INITIATIVE

The description within the preceding section shows that the Sand Hill Service Delivery Initiative was quite consistent with school reform and inclusion research and theory. The effort's adherence to "best practice" therefore provides some justification for the school leadership's perception that the practices introduced would be sustainable within their school community. In this section, continued consideration of Sand Hill's history focuses on the fifth year of the inclusive education reform effort – 1993-94. Of specific interest at this point are the surprising findings that emerged from evaluation of Sand Hill teachers' perceptions.

As mentioned in the preceding section, a federal research grant awarded to Sand Hill School and the University of Minnesota in 1993 was intended to support progress in three principal ways: (a) inquiry into the school's implementation of past initiatives, (b) use of this information in the facilitation of further adoption of best practices in inclusive education, and (c) sharing of findings about inclusive education and comprehensive educational reform with interested local, state, and national audiences. Also briefly mentioned was the fact that unanticipated change accompanied Sand Hill's receipt of the grant award. Namely, the school's original principal departed and was followed by a person who was entirely new to Sand Hill. This change in building-level leadership was one of several interrelated factors that influenced the initial and subsequent focus of the grant.

After much deliberation at the outset of the grant award, most involved with the grant saw the influx of resources and the arrival of a new principal as a fortuitous convergence of events – one that constituted an opportunity to fine tune the procedural details of the flowchart. In the grant's first year, the grant team conducted interviews of the Sand Hill teaching staff in order to evaluate the current state of problem-solving practices at the school and to identify areas that may require such refinement. During the development of the interview process, the team decided to pursue the additional goal of seeking an understanding of teachers' perceptions of current service delivery practices – both their thoughts about use and effectiveness of those practices and their opinions of the broader supports available to them in teaching children (that is, things they may have perceived as supportive that were not necessarily depicted on the flowchart).

It is important to stress that, while the questions had been expanded, the primary intention of the interviews remained one of developing a deeper understanding about how teachers used the supports that the Service Delivery Initiative provided. And the primary goal remained one of determining what was most effective about the initiative and what modifications may be needed to improve implementation. These leaders' perception, after all, was that the initiative was working for the schools' children and adults alike. Thus, while the initiative's school and university-based leaders anticipated *some* dissatisfaction with *parts* of the current initiative, their general expectation was that the interviews would confirm a basic level of satisfaction regarding the flowchart and the initiative. The end in mind, to reiterate, was to help the already-adopted initiative to become further embedded within the school's operation. The results of the interview process, however, called the leadership's presumptions very much into question, and these revelations caused initial dismay on behalf of the leadership.

THE TEACHER INTERVIEW PROCESS

Initially, the grant team envisioned the interviews as informal discussions with a few representative teachers as a method to gain their perspectives on the Service Delivery Initiative flowchart. One of the initiative's school-based leaders was to facilitate these talks. When a school-based leader and university colleague first presented the idea of informal interviewing to the school's Inclusion

Committee, some members of that committee felt that the feedback would be more honest and accurate if people from outside the school conducted the interviews. Based upon this recommendation and on the grant team's desire to ensure the validity of interviews, the team agreed that only university-based staff would conduct the interviews and would transcribe and analyze the raw data that the interviews yielded. These circumstances emphasized an especially prominent role for the university-based members of the grant team. An important though unintended upshot of this decision was that the team subsequently focused considerable effort upon collecting information in a one-way fashion – school-based interviewee to university-based interviewer. The alternative of sponsoring two-way dialogues among all the stakeholders was unwittingly ignored.

The grant team's research effort continued to refine the teacher interview plans in various respects. The team decided, for instance, that *all* teachers should have an opportunity for an interview rather than just a representative few. The scope of the interviews changed as the planned interview process became more formal than was originally conceived. The research team determined that, rather than focusing strictly on the Service Delivery Initiative and the flowchart, it would be important to ask more broadly about support (i.e., people and places you go to, and activities you do to keep things running smoothly on a daily basis, as well as in times of crisis). Further, in order to honor the interviewees' confidentiality, members of school staff – even including those directly involved in the grant – were to see only a synthesized version of the interview results. Thus, as a result of interview process refinements that were rooted in concerns specific to the Sand Hill context, there were changes in the planned pool of participants, in the focal topics, and in the plan for reporting findings.

INTERVIEW FINDINGS: SOME GENERAL THEMES

Before describing the overall interview themes, a brief discussion of the analysis process is in order. Twenty-six teachers volunteered for the interviews during the fall of 1993. It was determined that these teachers represented a fairly comprehensive cross-section of perspectives and experiences at Sand Hill School (such as teachers from all grade levels, specialists and generalists, newer and veteran teachers, a range of teaching styles, and teachers from various programs). Two of the four university colleagues conducted the interviews using an interview protocol that consisted of question prompts, taking notes during the interviews, and recording additional impressions immediately following the interview. The interviewer then put the interview content into narrative form, which was sent to the interviewees within two weeks after the interview as a way to check the accuracy of interpretation. The narratives were revised until each teacher indicated that the written narratives captured the content of their respective interviews. These narratives then became the source of the university research team's study. The inquiry included several phases: independent analysis of each written summary, group discussion of these analyses, theme searches based upon the various "sorts," and views of the data. Eventually the research team reached a consensus on the strong and emerging themes from their view of the data.

Although an exhaustive description of all interview themes is beyond the scope of this monograph, it is important that the reader has a general understanding of several themes that the research team shared with the Sand Hill teachers following the analysis and interpretation. Those interview themes are briefly summarized in the following paragraphs.

First, among the strengths and effective supports identified, teachers seemed on the whole to feel that they had adequate social and emotional support among colleagues. The staff generally indicated that informal support and collaboration among colleagues was helpful. For instance, teachers felt that "dropping in" on colleagues to talk about students, curriculum, and school issues

was useful, although not always sufficient. And teachers also generally indicated that forms of support that did not require a large group or a formal scheduled meeting were easier and could be useful. While the staff tended to feel that the flowchart process featured some of these informal aspects that interviewees generally seemed to favor, the initiative instituted new collaborative structures that required a more formal teaming orientation.

But, while the interviews revealed that many people did indeed feel a sense of collaboration, there was also a prevalent theme related to feelings of separation, to a lack of shared purpose especially in the implementation of the Service Delivery Initiative, and to isolation among certain groups and for certain individuals. In short, a marked pattern of "we/they" emerged from the interviews. Therefore, the interview results generally suggested a significant lack of consensus about the flowchart process and the provision of special services to students at Sand Hill School. This finding was unexpected.

Despite the Service Delivery Initiative's significant efforts to provide a flexible and responsive system of support – efforts described in detail earlier in this chapter – Sand Hill interviewees identified a number of concerns and challenges that were, strikingly, related precisely to supports that the flowchart itself depicted. Some had raised issues, for instance, concerning the purpose and necessity of the flowchart's formal support structures. The more formal support structures (i.e., symposia, Village Support Team, Child Study) took the form of scheduled meetings that typically involved a mixture of roles including classroom teachers, specialists, special education staff, the principal, and others. Dissatisfaction and confusion that the staff members expressed in their interviews were attributed to a variety of factors. Among the most prevalent elements of the staff members' disapproval were a lack of understanding or agreement with the flowchart's emphasis or with its underlying goals related to inclusive practices, disagreements with the roles and responsibilities that the flowchart implied (including the formal role of consultation with the principal prior to referral), and frustration with the type of support received. Classroom teachers' comments about dissatisfaction with special education services also tended to signal conflict between special and general education teachers, and this appeared to contradict the tenet of community cohesiveness that the school had supposedly embraced and had in fact espoused in its statements of vision and its slogans. Most jarringly, perhaps, were the teachers' expressions of a level of dissatisfaction that seemed to expose hidden conflicts. In sum, the school-based leaders and university partners had in no way anticipated that the interviews would result in such a relatively high level of negative reaction to the flowchart. Although surprised by the intensity of the findings, the initiative's leadership hoped to initiate action in order to directly influence the staff and to improve the situation.

REPORTING INTERVIEW FINDINGS TO THE SCHOOL

The research team's initial analysis and interpretation of teacher interview data were completed at the end of January. While the grant's original plan called for the reporting of interview findings back to the teachers in January, the entire teaching community did not hear the interview results until late March. This delay in the reporting timeline was primarily due to the pains that the research team took to drafting a written summary that could truly maintain the anonymity while preserving the integrity of the analysis. The hiatus in the reporting of findings appeared to contribute to difficulties once the report was finally available: It had been four months since the interviews had been conducted, and, during this period, the flowchart's function and role remained unclear and ambiguous. This seemed to undermine the sense of promise that the change of principals and the initiation of the grant had initially held.

The grant team had hoped to facilitate sharing the interview data with the school community in a way that would enhance understanding and might empower that staff to take collective action. But, given the time delay and mixed results that emerged from the interviews, troubling questions about how and where to begin persisted. One research team member first met with the school principal and two of the initiative leaders in order to discuss preliminary findings, to hear reactions to the data, and to consider alternatives for reporting the data to the community. The team felt that the report should remain aligned with the initial aim of the interview process – the aim of supporting teachers, parents, administrators, and students in their work to improve the ways they met the needs of all students. The grant team found the task of maintaining this alignment to be intensely challenging and delicate. The team faced a dilemma: though the team was ideologically and emotionally committed to producing a report that was helpful to the school, it was also ethically bound to share the interview results accurately. Ultimately, a group examined the findings and collaborated in developing a communication plan.

In February, a group of university-based and school-related people, including special educators, general educators, administrators, and parents, met to determine a process for bringing the interview data to the Sand Hill community. The appointed group suggested a voluntary tea party as a casual, interactive, and perhaps less threatening way for teachers to learn about their collective perceptions of support and service delivery. Several general and special education staff from the group worked out the logistical details and put some thought into creating an appropriate atmosphere. The research team produced handouts and wall posters that displayed themes generated during analysis of the staff interviews; the handouts identified overall themes organized as strengths and areas of concern, and provided more detailed descriptions of these themes with respect to each interview question. In doing this, the team sought to put the data into a form that accurately yet discretely reflected the interview comments with an eye on helping the staff move toward identifying actions for school improvement.

Most of the school's teachers attended the tea party, and, since teachers arrived and left at different times, it was primarily a self-guided learning experience. Teachers moved about the room, at times interacting with one another as they read the information and sipped tea in the process. Grant team members were dispersed within small group areas to serve as resources, should questions arise concerning results and to get a sense of this information-sharing activity. During the first five minutes of the tea party, the interview process was reintroduced, reminding people of the purpose and how it grew from wanting to hear perspectives on problem-solving supports and the Service Delivery Initiative flowchart. The event concluded with several teachers inviting their colleagues to think further about actions for improvement, and to join in responding to the challenges at hand. As teachers left, they received a feedback sheet asking for their impressions in hearing the findings, the degree to which the findings represented their own beliefs and perceptions about the school, and the degree to which these findings represented their colleagues' beliefs and perceptions.

THE INITIAL RESPONSES TO THE INTERVIEW RESULTS

Staff members returned relatively few feedback sheets, but, again, the responses demonstrated widely varied perspectives. Of the nine sheets returned, all felt that the findings were accurate or very accurate reflections of both their own and colleagues' perspectives. Anecdotal feedback ran parallel to the written feedback, supporting the validity of the data, and confirming that the interview themes were accurate and that mixed feelings were indeed prevalent regarding the nature of teacher support within the school.

The mixture of feelings and impressions about the reported information ranged from relief and pleasure that "both the positives and negatives were so accurately shared" to feelings of anger and of feeling blamed. Some specialists and classroom teachers felt relief in having negative perspectives and areas of disagreement overtly acknowledged. To some, it seemed liberating to have issues and challenges out in the open. Sand Hill School had a reputation in the community and with other schools as being great – almost perfect. Part of the tea party's message was about internally stating the unspeakable: "We aren't as tight and cohesive as our public image suggests... We have conflict here... We're a great school in many ways, but we're not perfect after all..." However, the findings also indicated some dissatisfaction among classroom teachers regarding special education support. Thus, to some who attended the tea party – particularly special education staff members – the findings reported at the party felt devaluing and not supportive of their ongoing efforts to help ensure that the school effectively served all of its children. Interestingly, some special educators appeared to feel "set up" by the interview process: By virtue of the interviews' association with inclusive education reform in general, special educators comprised the only group of teachers specifically identified in negative ways. Therefore, some special educators appeared to feel that they were easy targets of expressions of dissatisfaction.

Another focus of some negative interview comments dealt with the previous principal's public and overt promotion of inclusive education reform efforts. In particular, the Service Delivery Initiative's administrative association was the subject of some negative comments by some teachers. They shared perceptions, for example, that the administration's role at most phases of the flowchart process was too central. And, indeed, the incoming principal interpreted this information as being indicative that a less central administrative approach would be appropriate; he therefore proceeded with caution regarding the specific direction of the Service Delivery Initiative.

In short, the reporting process set in motion a series of intentional but uncoordinated attempts to develop broader participation within the school. The flowchart structure for service delivery, rather than being generally endorsed as was expected, remained ambiguous and unclear.

ATTEMPTS TO REASSERT LEADERSHIP AND SUPPORT ACTION

The leadership group who planned the tea party felt that this gathering would be only one of several ways to invite reflection upon the interview results and encourage further school improvement actions. Other strategies used to invite action and to identify targets for improvement included written follow-up to all the teachers and the solicitation of reactions from existing committees. The leadership group felt that some of the groups and committees already in place within the school (for instance, the school social committee and the curriculum committee) might have overlapping and natural connections with some of the needs identified in the interview results. Because of the uncertainty surrounding the flowchart's future and because of the new principal's efforts to reorganize building leadership structures to conform with his perception of staff priorities, the Inclusion Committee became considerably less active.

After the tea party, teachers were encouraged to examine the interview results further, either in committees or through private reflection. University colleagues communicated their willingness to join in and support as desired, but viewed this process of taking action as something that needed to primarily grow from within Sand Hill School. The grant team drafted "ready-for-action" questions intended to support committees in examining the interview results, and thereby to lead to actions that might improve Sand Hill School. Significantly, most of the school committees had at least one of the party's planning group as members, and these people agreed to link the learning from the interviews with the work of their respective committees in an effort to enable progress

toward responsive action. Another expectation was that these groups would share their work on these issues at regular staff meetings in order to communicate ideas to the school and to learn from one another.

RESULTS OF THE ATTEMPTS TO TAKE ACTION

In sum, it was ironic that the original goal of refining the details of a specific service delivery procedure became lost due to the diminished visibility of the flowchart that emerged during the lengthy interview-feedback process, the expanded focus of the inquiry, and the emotion-laden implications of the results. In performing their functions, most of the school committees did not take actions that were attributed to learning from the interview data. Two committees did consider teacher interview results as formal agenda items during meetings, and one of these committees identified several actions focused on building social connections and reinforcing positive adult relationships. The other committee felt that it was key to try to address the "we/they" feelings that the interviews had suggested as prevalent in the school. Though the committee tried bringing this forward during two staff meetings, there were no apparent results, decisions, or responses.

By the end of the 1993-94 school year, there did not appear to be any school-wide or formal actions that grew from the interview data being shared. In the following school year (1994-95, sixth year in this story line), there continued to be little public dialogue regarding the findings and conflict around the Service Delivery Initiative. Some of the initiative leaders backed away from providing leadership, others continued efforts in moving forward but in a less public manner. A once thriving school initiative, which was also the focal point of the grant, had become a peripheral initiative by the fall of 1994. Some might even say that the initiative died, as remnants remained but were no longer overtly tied to the procedural and philosophical symbol of the flowchart. In any case, the Service Delivery Initiative was no longer a strong presence in the life of the school. As is natural, initiatives of new reform agendas emerged to fill the void. However these initiatives and their underlying issues were discussed with little overt reference to inclusive education reform, either in support or in disavowal.

The grant team also struggled with how to proceed. The grant had been charged with seeking to understand how inclusive education reform (in part represented by the Service Delivery Initiative) had become sustained within a school. As the reform received less prominence in the school, so did the grant and its resources. While the grant struggled with focus and tried a variety of things to reestablish a meaningful direction, some of the "founding" school-based service delivery leaders began a sustained inquiry into why the Service Delivery Initiative did not sustain. This overall analysis process and content is described in the following chapter of this monograph.

CHAPTER 3

OFFERING AN ANALYSIS: WHY DIDN'T THE SERVICE DELIVERY INITIATIVE SUSTAIN?

JO MONTIE
TOM KOCH
MIKE BONNER

The series of staff interviews at Sand Hill School uncovered a significant and unanticipated depth of staff disinvestment with the Service Delivery Initiative. The strength of this disinvestment came as a challenge to key staff and leaders of the initiative because they had perceived the effort to be embedded and expanding. The interviews demonstrated that, while there were several teachers who had positive experiences with aspects of the flowchart and about the Service Delivery Initiative in general, conflict and lack of consensus were prominent in many teachers' views of the initiative. When the disagreement became public at the tea party, the staff struggled in response. As a result of the struggle and confusion that the interview results introduced among the staff, the Service Delivery Initiative declined through a state of ambiguity and uncertainty into extinction.

The grant team struggled as well. In their effort to make sense of these perplexing findings, two of the original Service Delivery Initiative leaders (hereafter referred to in this chapter as the analysis dyad or the dyad) began an in-depth inquiry into what had happened to this promising yet unsustained initiative. The analysis dyad, eventually joined by the rest of the grant team, explored why the initiative did not sustain and sought better understandings regarding the relationship between conflict and disinvestment. This chapter offers a description of the grant team's analysis and interpretation of the Sand Hill Service Delivery Initiative experience. It begins with a general description of the analysis process, and continues with a summary of the resulting interpretation. The *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* (which Chapter Four describes in detail) grew from this analysis.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE ANALYSIS PROCESS: STEPPING INTO *THE SWAMP*

The Service Delivery Initiative experience was rife with ambiguity and complexity. The findings that emerged from the interview process, for instance, demonstrated that the teachers as a group did not agree on such issues as the best way to provide services to all students. Instead, many perspectives existed, and differing opinions and conflicting values abounded. This complexity, compounded by the change in administrative leadership, made next steps extremely difficult to identify and pursue. The grant team, too, was derailed by ambiguity: While the school staff, naturally, wanted to learn about the interview findings and the grant was committed to share the findings, clear next steps were not readily apparent to the grant leadership. Instead, the issues became more confused and the team's sense of direction was disrupted. Though the grant team's sense of commitment to the school remained, paradoxically, the object of that commitment was unclear. In short, a "Now what!?" feeling prevailed.

The grant leadership's initial responses were to support dialogue in the school about the exposed conflict and the uncertainty surrounding the Service Delivery Initiative. They also began to look at other schools with similar initiatives to see what could be learned from their experiences. Significant grant time at Sand Hill School was spent in direct consultation with the special education staff to support their actions and work during this very difficult and ambiguous time. The special education staff was also dealing with the additional complication of team member turnover during this period, which affected their ability to contribute continuity in leadership to the school's ongoing dialogue. Around this period of time the district completed a new mission, vision, and strategic plan and was supporting buildings pursuing this process at a specific school-community level. The school, led by the new principal (who also was a grant team member), accessed district resources in an effort to renew their vision and articulated goals through a strategic planning process. Administrative leadership at Sand Hill School felt this might refocus and reunite the school community.

Although productive, none of these responses addressed the root questions regarding the failure of the once thriving Service Delivery Initiative. The situation can be aptly described as residing in "the swamp." This an image that Schön (1987) has used to describe the complexity, ambiguity, and often-conflicting values that characterize work within the education milieu – from daily teaching to educational systems change and public policy work (Schall, 1995). (Refer to Chapter One of this monograph for an earlier discussion of Schön's "swamp" and "high hard ground" metaphors.) In short, Schön (1987) has written that, while some problems are inherently responsive to linear and technical applications of solutions, problems that arise from the swamp are messy and indeterminate. Swamp problems, Schön has held, require inventing, testing, and reflecting on their solution. The ambiguous, complex, and "swamplike" new picture that emerged from the Sand Hill interviews seemed tailor-made for the kind of invention, assessment, and reflection that Schön has recommended.

COPING WITH COMPLEXITY THROUGH REFLECTION

Thus, the school-based analysis dyad engaged in an informal process of reflection about how to make sense of what happened with the Service Delivery Initiative, and about what, if anything, they could learn from it. To extend Schön's (1987) image, the two repeatedly climbed into and out of the swamp as they engaged during the ensuing months in a process of prolonged reflection – reflecting as a pair, reflecting separately, and reflecting with a variety of colleagues. Among other things, this process confirmed that the Service Delivery Initiative experience directly challenged some dominant conceptions in school change literature and conflicted with the dyad's knowledge and experience of other initiatives and of other schools. With continuing puzzlement, the dyad's focus was, in short, to seek understanding of this apparent breach between theory and practice.

In pursuing the process of intervention, assessment, and reflection that Schön (1987) recommended, the analysis dyad engaged in a cycle of inquiry resembling Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, a model that depicts learning within a four-stage process consisting of *concrete experience*, *analysis and interpretation*, *generation of hypotheses*, and *testing out in action*. This Dewian cycle may be continuously repeated with new insights influencing one's current experiences and the interpretations of those experiences. In the specific context of the Service Delivery Initiative, the dyad's analysis started from their concrete interactions with the initiative experience over time; the dyad had helped initiate and implement the Service Delivery effort, and had participated in and fostered its ongoing development. In examining the reported staff interview findings and the community's reaction to those findings, the dyad began to analyze and interpret their engagement

with the Service Delivery Initiative. As this analysis progressed, they began to generate hypotheses about the nature of collaboration, about individuals' investments in collaborative endeavors, and about the work of facilitating school change. Eventually, the analysis dyad began to share and test out their hunches and to engage in active inquiry in daily school life.

Although this experiential learning process appears rather orderly, keep in mind that in reality the dyad's analysis process was dynamic and therefore much less ordered and more "swampish" than it appears here. The analysis occurred over time and within an ever-changing context. As the analysis dyad studied what occurred with the Service Delivery Initiative, for instance, they also brought in both past and present interactions and challenges with other areas of their work at Sand Hill and numerous other schools: The dyad continued to support-student level and systems-level initiatives, continued to facilitate staff development and respond to requests to present on various school change and inclusive school topics, and joined their grant colleagues in many of the broader activities cited earlier. The dyad's presentation method during this time period shifted to one of raising questions, sharing challenges, and paying attention to their own evolving respect for perspective. In keeping with the tenets of both Kolb and Schön, then, as the dyad's reflection proceeded, their experiences influenced their analysis process and, reciprocally, their analysis process shaped their work in real time.

During the second and third years of the Shared Responsibility grant, as the dyad shared their observations with the rest of the grant team and with others interested in sustained school improvement, the two also began to organize hypotheses regarding factors that they felt were most central to collaborative work. Visual diagrams and illustrations of hypothesized relationships and interactions among the factors comprised another level of the dyad's knowledge construction process. The grant team also examined the model during informal meetings. The dyad tested and refined the framework based upon the experimentation in "the swamp," to apply Schön's vernacular. As this progressed, the framework became meaningful to a small group of individuals (primarily the grant team) as a tool for maintaining investment in their school improvement efforts. Testing of the learning that had begun to emerge from the service delivery quandary therefore, began with the grant team itself as it confronted its own natural challenges regarding the maintenance of investment and momentum.

ANALYSIS INTERPRETATION: MAKING SENSE OF THE SERVICE DELIVERY EXPERIENCES

The following section addresses some of the themes from the analysis of the Service Delivery Initiative experience by first briefly describing some early interpretations of the experience, followed by an extended description of these analysis themes. This discussion – reflecting some of the roots of the Shared Responsibility Framework – links the analysis themes to various behaviors or "habits of interaction" that have been observed in many school communities.

INITIAL ANALYSIS: IDENTIFICATION OF PARADOX

The dyad's early inquiry, which occurred during the year after the teacher interviews, involved contrasting some of their espoused beliefs and school-change knowledge with the particulars of the Service Delivery Initiative experiences. The pair readily accepted that the initiative effort, as conceived, was not perfect. But the dyad also believed that those involved had systematically attended to many of the "right things" over the more than four years of this initiative's development and implementation. As noted in Chapter Two, throughout the Service Delivery Initiative's

development, attention had been given to finding the right mix of leadership behavior, political savvy, and management of resources.

The dyad also turned their view toward common explanations for school change "failure." Often when initiatives meet with challenges or outright failure, a common response is to find fault. Leaders describe participants as "resistant"; participants describe leaders as "out of touch"; both find fault with the change process. Blame is liberally tossed about: "That won't work in our school!" or "This program isn't as great as we thought," or "They don't understand what it is like for us," or "Ignore them, they're always so negative." After getting over some of their own feelings of blame and disappointment, the dyad searched for insight into school reform failure that went beyond blaming the initiative, the people, or the change process itself.

Over time, the analysis dyad further inspected their own espoused beliefs and actions related to leading change and considered the perceptions that others had of this leadership and the experience. One of the most significant discoveries that emerged from this early analysis was the paradox that the Service Delivery Initiative, which was based precisely upon inclusive practices and on a participatory change process, was in the end perceived by some as *exclusive*. For some, that is, there was a large gap between the intended experience and actual experience with the initiative. A learning gap – the discrepancy between desired and actual states – can provide a welcome entree to new learning and growth as perceived deficits are actively addressed. But, while the dyad had expected gaps and even welcomed them as potential motivators, the gap between intended and actual experiences in the Service Delivery Initiative seemed to have grown unmanageably large, and provided little, if any, inspiration or motivation for collective learning progress. They wondered, "What helps to account for this paradox?"

More questions and more paradox emerged from the dyad's initial exposure of the Service Delivery Initiative's quandary:

- Regarding ***leadership***, what role did personal leadership style play, and how could leadership behaviors be deemed authoritarian even in a case where the leadership approach was in appearance collaborative and participatory?
- Regarding ***partnerships***, how could it be that the initiative leaders sought participation from "everyone," yet partnerships tended to center around others whose thoughts and interpretations were similar?
- Regarding ***conflict***, was there a productive and manageable way to give voice to frustration and conflict?
- Regarding organizational ***vision***, what was the consequence of using vision to both evaluate progress and inspire movement?

And finally, given the fact that the initiative's conception and implementation were based on recommendations emerging from research and scholarly literature, the dyad questioned the role of *best practice* in informing an organization's identification of appropriate steps and responses within a change effort.

REFRAMING THE EXPERIENCE: HABITS OF INTERACTION IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNITIES

The previous discussion represents the dyad's tentative, "muddier" analysis of the Service Delivery Initiative experience at Sand Hill School. The analysis dyad and grant team, however, felt that the Sand Hill School experience resonated with the experiences of other schools, with the people and their interactions involving change initiatives in general. Many schools have experiences that involve shared hopes and expectations of an initiative; of growing investment by some and waning investment by others; of conflict, frustration, and disagreement; and of blaming and being blamed. These experiences are not specific to Sand Hill School. In all, it is what can happen when multiple participants have different perspectives within the "same" experience – the complicated process of education. With this experience, all school communities are vulnerable to the short-term responses described above. These responses – becoming stuck advocating for one's own perspective and not seeking to understand others'; seeking to find fault with external sources; and labeling or categorizing people – can become habits of sorts.

"Habits" describe ingrained ways of acting, believing, and thinking that are supported, reinforced, and developed without conscious examination (Covey, 1989; Szabo, 1996). "Community habits" are consistent behavior patterns among people in organizations containing these same elements. It is relatively easy for an individual's habits to become aligned with those of the collective community in which they live or work. However, it can be more difficult to separate one's personal habits with those of the community. Frequently, people within organizations are unaware of their community habits because these behaviors, thoughts, and beliefs infuse and permeate daily work: The messages that reinforce patterns and experience become "background music," so to speak, and people's actions and responses become hardened in cultural and community norms. This discussion of community habits links with the theories-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993) discussion offered in Chapter One. Ultimately, schools, or more precisely, the individuals that schools are made of, develop habits about how they look at their students, their colleagues, their families, and "the system," habits about listening and talking, and habits about learning from one another (Szabo, 1996).

Depending upon context and desired goals, habits, of course, can be beneficial or negative – "good habits" or "bad habits," so to speak. In the case of Sand Hill School's Service Delivery Initiative, questions arose about what might influence a heterogeneous group of individuals to remain engaged over time in its work – to improve learning for all children. The search for answers to this question was, in a sense, the quest for new and strengthened community habits that might displace typical, though less productive, habits. The quest, more specifically, was for better ways to support diverse partnerships, new interpretations and actions involving conflicts, new ways to view and seek leadership, and new ways of thinking about vision and planned change.

In sum, all of these aims call for new habits of communicating *with* each other, rather than *to* each other – habits of social interaction for *collective* investment. Because all schools are capable of developing productive new habits, the remainder of this chapter seeks to strengthen that capacity.

The following narrative promotes a new set of community habits (Table 3.1) and distinguishes them from the contrary habits that more typically appear in school reform efforts. Examples from the Service Delivery Initiative experience illustrate the old habits.

TABLE 3.1 "NEW" COMMUNITY HABITS

- MORE EXPERIENCES IN HETEROGENEOUS PARTNERSHIPS IN WHICH PEOPLE DO NOT ALL THINK THE SAME (PARTNERSHIP HABITS)
- NEW WAYS TO UNDERSTAND AND TALK ABOUT CONFLICT (CONFLICT HABITS)
- MORE ATTENTION PLACED UPON PEOPLE'S INVESTMENT (LEADERSHIP HABITS)
- STRONGER FOCUS UPON A RESPONSIVE AND NEGOTIABLE USE OF VISION AND PRACTICES (PLANNED CHANGE HABITS)
- INTEGRAL ROLE THAT COMMUNICATION HAS IN SHAPING THESE HABITS

HABITS OF PARTNERSHIP

In typical efforts to create or sustain change, what types of partnerships or interactions do schools emphasize? One commonly pursued aim is a philosophy of "valuing diversity" and of engaging in heterogeneous partnerships. But this is more often spoken than lived. As people prepare for, respond to, and structure their actions around change, they naturally seek to minimize uncertainty and, typically, pursue partnerships with others who share their views, beliefs, and interpretation of events. Out of habit there is a tendency toward homogeneous groups.

The Service Delivery Initiative illustrated this tendency for people to link with others who act and think "like us." The initiative's leaders, for instance, focused on building partnerships that employed the strength of an inspirational vision and the use of best practices to support change toward a more inclusive school. Bringing people together around common elements (such as shared vision and certain best practices) held merit. Yet, the initiative leaders focused their energy on maximizing collaborations with those who were engaged in some way with service delivery practices to begin with, and with those who embraced the vision outwardly, building critical mass to generate momentum toward the initiative's objectives. This focus contributed to the tendency for the leaders to solicit the perspectives of people who generally "agreed" with them, and, relatedly, neglected to mindfully seek out and listen to those with substantially different view points.

In addition to the initiative leadership, the critical, indifferent, and undecided teachers, too, were vulnerable to the habit of surrounding themselves with like-minded people. Recall that the Service Delivery Initiative emphasized indirect supports such as consultation and problem-solving, which contrasted with direct support services like pull-out instruction. While some of the teachers did feel that the initiative supported them in furnishing effective education and in providing integrated services to students, others more inclined to favoring pull-out instruction felt that the initiative actually threatened what they believed to be best for kids. Still others agreed in theory with the service delivery model, yet did not see enough relevance in practice as challenges related to actually teaching a diverse group of students arose. In the collegial interactions that the teachers sought in order to help address their challenges, the teachers tended to approach other like-minded staff members. The associations these individuals nurtured therefore emphasized shared perspectives and homogeneous partnerships.

Both the leadership and the teacher examples regarding the Service Delivery experience illustrate that, although unintentional, a product of the Sand Hill effort was the building and maintenance of homogeneous partnerships. With sad irony, in the case of the Service Delivery Initiative, an effort that was supposedly inclusive inadvertently veered toward exclusion. Thus, this case exemplifies how community habits can reinforce momentum toward homogeneity in partnerships.

Yet, in reality, schools are staffed by people who represent all facets of their community, and these institutions, of course, are intended to serve everyone in the community. This obvious aspect of the mission suggests that school improvement efforts will not sustain if leadership actions – conscious or unconscious – seek out collaboration with only the like-minded people in the community.

How can people in organizations respond to and nurture the variety of perspectives that exist within a community or team, while fostering some sense of shared direction, values, and experience? How, that is, can they pursue the seemingly impossible task of promoting both heterogeneity *and* some homogeneity concurrently? Part of the answer depends on the development of new community habits that consider how heterogeneous groups of people can truly work together toward a common purpose – new habits that help people to seek out and understand each other's points of view and help to avoid the tendency to label differing viewpoints as signs of "resistance" to an initiative. Yet, adding to the complexity and paradox that already saturates this task, seeking out diverse perspectives cannot be mandated or prescribed. Instead, effectively confronting the task requires a genuine desire to understand those who hold different perspectives. The desire must be paired with faith that, in the long run, such understanding will be rewarding and will promote important aspects of the organization's core purpose.

HABITS OF CONFLICT

Seeking out heterogeneous partnerships leads to an increased variety of life experiences, values, capacities, and perspectives. This variety often leads to the exposure of a second set of community habits – those surrounding responses to conflict. Well-intentioned people often experience significant conflict concerning the task of educating children. Curricular content, instructional process, roles and responsibilities, accountability, and the guiding values provide a few examples of areas where contentious content can emerge. In schools, typical habits regarding partnership and conflict can stand in the way of a manageable and productive view of these differences. One often hears the adage "problems are opportunities," yet actually moving through conflicts toward productive outcomes is difficult. Most readers are familiar with the community habits that reveal themselves when conflict arises. Typical responses include avoidance, and ignoring or hiding conflicts by pushing them "under the table" of negotiation and collaboration. And, often, once someone attempts to address latent conflict by bringing it out into public view, the conflict usually "breaks the table." At these times, issues are accompanied with intense emotions or are framed personally rather than as disagreements over practical issues. The Service Delivery Initiative experience provides examples of some of these ingrained patterns of interaction around conflict.

After conflicts came to light through the interview process, a variety of subtle and not-so-subtle "side-taking" ensued. Efforts to communicate identified issues became forums that emphasized differences and defining positions. Attempts to present options for addressing conflicts met with the suspicion of a strictly political view. Acknowledging the voices of dissatisfaction at the tea party – putting this significant conflict on the table, so to speak – unintentionally resulted in

strengthened factions rather than in the intended creation of an open forum to exchange perspectives. The weight of this conflict – its scope and intensity – became unmanageable. The relationships supporting the commitment to working toward effective service delivery were not strong enough to withhold the conflict that had suddenly become explicit.

Another habitual response to conflict is trying to "fix" it by attempting to repair issues and concerns as quickly and painlessly as possible. The grant team itself fell prey to this response in their attempts to support the school. Upon completion of the interviews and the initial analysis, grant leaders tried to guide the school to "take action," primarily through the use of existing school committees and teams. In retrospect, this quick shift towards inviting action was problematic in several ways. First, overemphasizing the need for action resulted in underestimating the need for collective reflection and shared discussion. There was insufficient awareness of what might be necessary in order to support people in their thoughtful and context-sensitive examination of this information. Second, the grant approached the task of presenting the interview results to school staff in a rather linear, technical manner. Although the process was intended to support positive change (i.e., "make conflict an opportunity") the effort resulted in the further disengagement of some of the teachers and leaders involved. The process appeared too prescriptive (e.g., "state your feelings and then follow *this* process") within that highly charged and personalized context.

Negative experiences with conflict, including table-breaking episodes and failed fixes, reinforce community members in keeping conflict under the table, where it eventually builds to the point of another table-breaking episode; one more bad experience blamed on people defined as unaligned regrettably becomes the outcome of this cycle. In organizational development, this is manifested in another new reform agenda, in wishing for new staff, and in actual departures of people from their organizations. Unfortunately, the cycle is more often than not repeated, and real influence leading to authentic change is slow in coming.

Strength and resolve for true change and growth come by going beyond surface harmony and by seeking the tensions inherent with the struggle of new learning (Patterson, 1993). Organizations need to be realistic about the effects, along with the strengths, of the wide diversity of perspectives that typify most school communities. Research literature has itself stressed that conflict is common and that it should be anticipated in virtually all manners of work in social contexts (Cowan, 1995; Evans, 1996; Fullan, 1991; Patterson, 1993; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994; Tjosvold, 1993). Yet, rarely does an organization seek to structure ongoing communication around the recognition of these different perspectives and around areas of disagreement (Cowan, 1995; Perrow, 1972; Tjosvold, 1993). The pressing need is for modes and means of organizational communication that aim not at quickly resolving or preventing conflict, but at making the discussion of conflict more manageable, and thereby keeping open the doors of social learning.

This alternative way of dealing with conflict – new habits that help people understand and talk about the conflict, yet without the intent of immediately fixing or "resolving" the conflict per se – is a challenge to develop. Habits, after all, constitute established ways of thinking, talking, and behaving. When people more openly acknowledge and accept the presence of conflict as natural, they can begin to more effectively and constructively respond to it: noticing, exploring, and understanding conflict. Returning to the table metaphor, this acceptance of the inevitability of conflict must be understood as "putting the conflict on the table in a manageable form." As the Service Delivery Initiative illustrated, too often organizations undervalue practices that emphasize dialogue and rush communication to conflict resolution, employing resources to search out new

solutions, the right initiative, or better ways to govern and make decisions. Thoughtful attempts to make conflict manageable by exploring perspectives can complement the effectiveness of an initiative or undertaking. It is the foundation for lasting improvement, just as it is the foundation for real learning.

HABITS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is a third community habit that warrants attention. The focus in not just how leaders lead, but also how people view, utilize, and respond to leadership. Accordingly, familiar habits and patterns surround both what leaders expect of themselves and what others expect of leaders. In terms of how people in an organization respond to leadership, one habit is to look to leaders for "the answer," an easy one if possible. There is a tendency to look for leadership in specific and sometimes limited situations. For instance, when a group is in conflict with heterogeneous perspectives clamoring for attention, a typical response is for people to expect leaders to provide a swift remedy (e.g., "If only our principal would just make them do it!"). Community members also invest considerable energy both searching and pining for the perfect mix of behaviors in their leader. For example, leaders have been defined along dimensions of relative authority, from authoritarian to laissez-faire. The Shared Responsibility grant's experience and analysis suggest that it is not enough to be a democratic leader or to inspire behaviors through transformational actions. Having a certain leadership style, for example, does not necessarily ensure that a leader maintains or nurtures the habit of being sensitive to clues about people's levels of investment in or withdrawal from school initiatives and projects. The experiences of the Service Delivery Initiative again provide some valuable illustrations.

Why, for instance, weren't clues to the teachers' disinvestment from the initiative more apparent prior to the interviews? And, why did the struggle snowball in a negative direction instead of becoming an opportunity for progress through learning and growth? Specifically, why didn't the leaders individually or collectively notice the underlying nature and causes of growing conflict and provide inspiration and guidance? An added paradox related to personal and collective investment helps to answer these questions. As the reform effort was implemented over time, leadership's personal investment in their conception of the Service Delivery Initiative influenced what they heard and saw, and what they didn't hear and couldn't see. From the leaders' perspective, components of the initiative were a primary vehicle to help general education teachers get the support they needed to include "all" children in their classrooms. While clearly teachers were an important consideration, the initiative leaders' primary concern regarding the teachers was how those staff members would implement the initiative, and could thus advance the initiative's intent of supporting all Sand Hill's students. Thus, the leadership's strong values and their own investments in the vision of inclusion may, ironically, have deafened them to the voices of crucial participants. When members of the staff did bring up areas of concern or question certain aspects of the initiative, it was difficult for the leaders to genuinely listen and understand perspectives that were contrary to their own vision and commitment. Although some staff continued to remain in the interchange, constructive dialogues (opportunities for staff to be heard and understood) diminished. The Service Delivery Initiative's leaders assumed that commitment to their value-oriented vision – a commitment that, after all, was validated by research-driven "best practice" – would sustain the initiative. With striking irony, the leadership's commitment, which one might ordinarily consider a strength, became a source of vulnerability because it inhibited the leaders' ability to see other perspectives and realities.

New leadership habits are necessary. First, effective leaders need to reflect on the consequences of their own investments in a cause while simultaneously attempting to enhance investment of others by seizing opportunities to invest in others' leadership behavior. This conception of investment attends to the contradictory outcomes of caring. Leaders who vest their personal interest in an initiative will take on added responsibility for the undertaking. The accompanying effect is that the leader's attention can be diverted from differing perspectives within the community. Leaders need, therefore, to be vigilant of their own levels of investment and to those of others. This aspect of leading needs to be continually discovered and nurtured as a school community engages in continuous improvement.

HABITS OF PLANNED CHANGE

The preceding discussion of leadership has pointed to the importance in attending to one's own and other people's investment in a group undertaking. Also warranted here is a look at other more general habits that can foster change. Intentional change – "planned change," if you will – involves thought and strategy. Leaders and organizations hold certain beliefs about the role of vision, the development of plans, and the identification of practices and actions. Analysis of the Service Delivery Initiative experience has yielded noteworthy observations about the implications of planfulness in organizational change.

First, consider habits related to the use of vision to plan and support school change. The initiative's leaders emphasized the broader vision and values of the school community, believing in the power of vision to generate meaning and purpose. The belief was that the power of vision, paired, as it was, with the aura of credibility in the form of "best practices," would generate the necessary momentum toward the articulated vision. But reflective analysis of the initiative experience supports the conclusion that the vision was *assumed* to be equally meaningful and inspiring to everyone in the community. Further, there were few opportunities for community members to genuinely and explicitly check in on this perceived meaning. Apparently, some didn't feel that it was "their" vision and, not surprisingly, felt excluded. In addition, there was an assumption that teachers would experience the linkages among the abstract school-wide vision, the more concrete depiction in the service delivery schema, and the even more concrete world of daily classroom life with students. Certainly, some community members did find both inspiration and connection among the vision, practices, and interactions with students. Yet, others saw the broad schoolwide vision and the service delivery practices as something quite separate from classroom life. Thus, to these teachers, there was no significant connection between the vision and daily practice. Because some in the community did feel meaningful connections between their everyday work and the vision underlying the Service Delivery Initiative, it is quite possible if not likely that these people held an unconscious assumption that everyone had the same experience.

Second, consider the use of best practice in defining actions. The initiative experienced problems related to the perception among some members of the community that elements of the service delivery effort were both prescriptive and "carved in stone." As mentioned, many of the practices depicted in the flowchart were considered best practices that were based on research. It is therefore significant that the bases for components of the flowchart's development were *external*. Thus, even though the initiative's elements were gradually introduced and were never a prepackaged set of interventions, some viewed the initiative's external aspects as unresponsive to teachers or otherwise out of touch with local conditions. Too few teachers owned the initiative's practices as a whole, especially because the community's partnership habits interfered with the way teachers' realities could be reflected in the initiative's implementation (or *not* reflected as it happened).

Typical habits of conflict, meanwhile, contributed to the problem because they assisted in keeping these perspectives hidden and, thus, unproductive. Though it is true that teachers didn't necessarily take ownership to change or revise aspects of the flowchart, it is at least as true that leadership habits didn't necessarily invite them to do so. This absence of communication contributed to the impression that things were beyond influence. Further, it is important to point out that some involved may have been reluctant to question the research base that supported the best practice-driven initiative – after all, you can't buck what's "best," right?

In short, chiefly for the reasons described here, the Service Delivery Initiative did not reflect the vital element of *local influence*. Accounting for local influence could have led to a more comprehensive investment among members of the community, and to a more successful and sustained effort on behalf of Sand Hill's students. These observations point to the need for better habits of planning and strategy. Though it is natural to desire predictable, linear, and tidy processes – efforts rooted in what Schön (1987) would call the "high hard ground" – Schön also reminds us that daily life in schools is messy and dynamic. Schön's admonition leaves us in search of ways to be planful about change even as we simultaneously remain fluid and responsive. But are there habits that help community members accept and respond productively on this less comfortable terrain?

New, alternative habits of planned change need to look at vision, practices, and the change process in more responsive, dynamic ways. Those involved with change must value the importance of local conditions, thereby developing habits that nurture the shaping of practices to more genuinely reflect local realities. Along with this must be the recognition that heterogeneous groups of people will find their meaning and inspiration in different ways. Establishing vision at the beginning of a planned change process, as is the usual habit in organizations, is not enough. That places high stakes on the dicey assumption that the meanings people attach to vision – if in fact they can be adequately understood in a few short sessions – are unchanging. Therefore, habits of repeated interaction with vision in abstract and concrete ways need to be formed.

SUMMARY OF HABITS: A FOCUS ON COMMUNICATION IN INTERACTIONS

What these habits have in common is that they are bound up in a context of social interaction. Schools don't act in partnership, talk about conflict, demand leadership, and so forth: It is the *people* within them, struggling as a community, that develop and engage in habits of social interaction. Community habits have an accumulating influence. Dialogues, for instance, can result in decisions that either facilitate or impede future dialogue; subsequent dialogue, in turn, serves again to affect communication patterns even farther down the road, and so on. This underscores the need for new community habits that nurture effective and sensitive interaction. Part of this task can be addressed if community members pause and reflect upon how they are interacting, and on why they are interacting in the ways they are. Above all, new habits should include recognition that there is no panacea in the business of working toward change within a group: Investments that are both sustained and collective demand that people learn to face the struggle inherent with ambiguity, tension, and uncertainty by staying in communication.

CLOSING COMMENTS

This analysis of the Service Delivery Initiative reflects outcomes similar to many other educational initiatives. There is a history in educational reform of organizational change approaches that attempt to *manage* specific factors in the improvement process (Fullan, 1991; Hall & Hord, 1987; Havelock, 1995). While these efforts provide some successes, few of them report successful

application of their approaches from one setting to another. This should come as no surprise to those who have experienced the uniqueness of different systems. A burgeoning literature on "organizational culture," in fact, has focused exhaustively on that very aspect of social systems. A significant contribution of the Shared Responsibility effort is to show that, even within a single organization, individuals will attribute different meaning to the same organizational objectives or actions. In a sense, there are personal or individual "cultures" that warrant attention as well. Accordingly, productive engagement and sustained investment requires some means for examining people's experiences and of considering how people view practices. In short, these ends demand persistent communication in specific ways.

This analysis reflects extensive inquiry into the conditions necessary to realize sustained investment in school improvement initiatives. These insights that emerged regarding social interaction and community habits, combined with continued experiences at Sand Hill and other schools, have been the key bases for the development of the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*. The next chapter presents a description of that framework.

CHAPTER 4

DESCRIBING A MODEL: THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION FOR COLLECTIVE INVESTMENT

TOM KOCH
MIKE BONNER

The story of the Service Delivery Initiative, along with the results of many other disappointing school reform efforts identified in bandwagon metaphors, suggest that educational organizations striving toward continuous improvement need to concentrate at least in part on efforts that can enhance stakeholders' investment and can sustain relevance over time. As analysis of the Sand Hill School efforts has suggested, this task of sustaining the collective investment of stakeholders presents multiple challenges. Yet in spite of the difficulties inherent in the task, those who seek to engage in sustained school improvement must find a way to address these challenges. Future school improvement efforts will likely be tied to a respective school community's ability to retain its sense of uniqueness and diversity as it improves learning outcomes for all children. The model presented here is a proposed tool to address these issues. This chapter provides the technical introduction to the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*.[1] Following a brief overview, the chapter presents the model by discussing the components in relation to their dynamic interaction with one another. Emmelia Elementary, a fictional school that emphasizes differentiated instructional practices in its reform efforts, is used in this chapter to illustrate how to apply framework components and to highlight the components' relationships and interactions. A summary of major points concludes the chapter.

OVERVIEW OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

Sustaining the collective investment of stakeholders in a school is a daunting challenge. The Shared Responsibility Framework can serve as a tool with which to address this challenge. The model emphasizes inclusive communication and participatory decision making in the process of organizing and taking action. Key features of the model are finding commonalties among multiple perspectives, making actions fit local conditions, using successive accomplishments to refine and improve practices, and expanding people's beliefs about a vision for the future. Other models purport to address the challenge of change, each with a slightly different focus, but all sharing the aim of seeking to increase people's investment and commitment to organizational goals (Hall & Hord, 1987; Havelock, 1995; Henning-Stout & Conoley, 1988; Nadler, 1981; Weisbord & Janoff, 1995).

[1] Chapter 7 provides the discovery process meant to support the application of predictive and reflective uses of the model through elevated attention to the reader's context.

The Shared Responsibility Framework discussed here differs from other models in three significant ways. First, the model provides a flexible and contextually-responsive set of guidelines that can nurture proactive planning and reflective analysis. The model provides no sequential or linear set of steps to follow, although it may be tempting for those engaged in organizational change to search for such stepwise solutions. (Such a prescription would certainly be less complex both to describe and understand.) Second, the way the components are *structured* and *integrated* is unique to this model. Although the literature on change and organization commonly discusses the importance of most of the model's components (e.g., Fullan, Miles, & Taylor, 1980; Maher, Illback, & Zins, 1984; Perrow, 1972; Schein, 1969; Schmuck & Runkel, 1994), the elements central to the framework are typically treated in a strategic, intervention-oriented fashion. By contrast, this model recognizes the dynamic nature of the conceptual components through an emphasis on social communication. To stress, this focus on communication within a group engaged in change activities features communication that is *about the components and their interactions*. Third, experience suggests that the model has value and practical application for any type of social "system" – from families, to work teams, schools, districts, and businesses.

Although the strengths and limitations of the framework are examined in some detail in Chapter Six of this monograph, some comments warrant mention here. First, optimism for this model is tempered with the acknowledgment that, although helpful, conceptual models can blind users to other important features of change and organizations that do not fit neatly into a particular model or structure (Henning-Stout, 1994). It is also important to acknowledge that no single model or framework can address all the important aspects of change and continuous improvement. A further caveat regarding the model relates to its complex, interactional nature. This is a two-sided coin: while the framework's complexity is an important part of what makes it an effective tool for meeting a vital goal – the goal of maintaining the investments of people in an organization – that very complexity hinders swift comprehension and application.

THE COMPONENTS AND THEIR INTERACTIONS

To preview the discussion here, the components of the model include: *Vision*, the *Abstraction Ladder*, the concept of *Proposed Practice*, *Communication*, *Personal and Organizational Learning*, and *Roles and Responsibilities*. To stress, the interactions among these components are perhaps as important as the elements themselves. Framework components and interactions are depicted in Figure 4.1. Table 4.1 provides a glossary of the terms used to label the components.

Examining in isolation the parts of a complex whole often aids understanding. Yet, as mentioned, the integrity of the Shared Responsibility Model demands that the components be considered in relation to each other. Main sections of this chapter are therefore organized according to natural interactive groupings. Discussion within each of several sets of these interactions correspond to components of the framework; also within each set of interactions, application examples appear regularly throughout the chapter. The intent of this arrangement is to allow for effective explanation about the model while maintaining its integrity.

The graphic representation of the model (Figure 4.1) and the didactic description presented in this monograph are not apt to be equally meaningful to everyone; understandings will vary based upon each reader's experience and unique situation. In continuing the task of teaching readers about the framework, the following chapters will address application of the model in a more direct and sustained manner. Chapter Five revisits Sand Hill School and illustrates one way in which people there have attempted to apply components of the framework. Chapter Six introduces potential applications, and Chapter Seven guides the reader through considering the model in a more individually relevant manner.

FIGURE 4.1 THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK OF SOCIAL INTERACTION FOR COLLECTIVE INVESTMENT: THE COMPLETE GRAPHIC

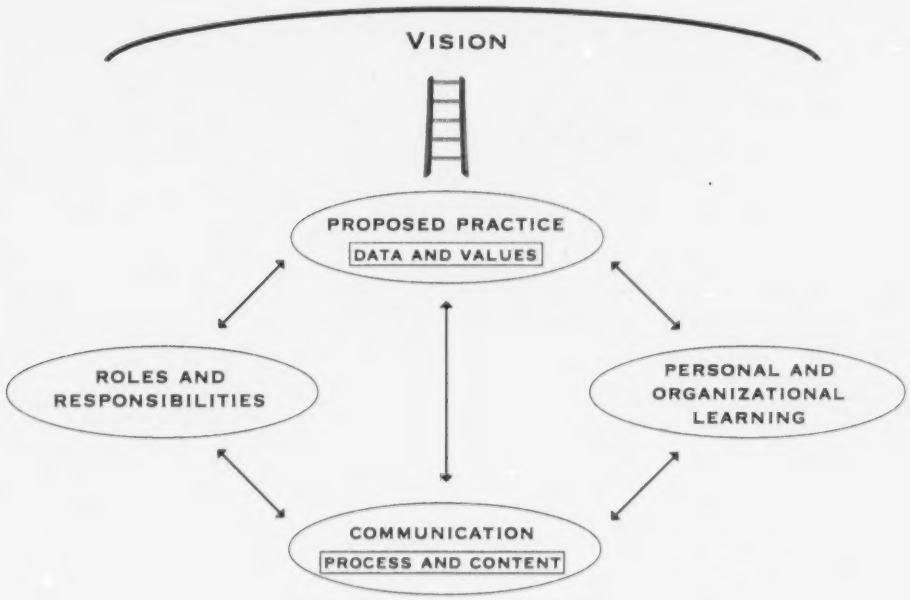

TABLE 4.1 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND PHRASES

Abstraction ladder: A metaphor (adapted from a concept described by the linguist Alfred Korzybski, 1933) that helps users respond to challenges of keeping vision consistent, inclusive, and inspirational. In using the ladder we seek to understand the different levels of meaning that people attach to an idea as a continuum ranging from the most concrete to the most abstract conceptions.

Sometimes we need to go "down the ladder" to more concrete actions to emphasize relevance and to assist in understanding; other times, we refer to things "higher on the ladder" – to actions in terms that are more abstract. This provides a more universal sense of purpose to daily experiences.

Communication: The term springs from the assumption that, when human beings engage in a joint activity, there is an accute need for understanding. The emphasis of a specialized connotation of this term is not on the entire communication process, but is instead focused on assessment of the nature of conflict and its impact on investment. This process is organized around agreement-oriented dialogue. Thus, in the context of our discussion, "communication" generally refers to a commitment to pursue regular checks regarding agreements, and, if conflicts arise, to determine steps to achieve new agreements.

Agreements are dynamic because they respond to relevant information as it arises (e.g., "Well, knowing this changes everything!"); regular checking of the status of agreements is necessary as a means of updating understandings.

Data: Information that includes best practices and other transferable professional knowledge, but also encompasses the specialized local knowledge unique to a given educational context. These kinds of information influence the articulation of a proposal for local practice (i.e., a plan of action at the level of the district, building, cluster or classroom), but only in combination with the values of the participants in the activity.

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TABLE 4.1 GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND PHRASES (CONT.)

Organizational learning: Schools, like other organizations, exist because the complexity of their core activities demand the involvement of groups of people rather than individuals acting alone. There is a tendency for people interacting within groups to deal overtly only with a specific and tangible task. The construct of organizational learning underscores the need to be as overt about issues of skills, styles, and needs. Rather than a single finite set of skills that can enable accomplishment of a change initiative – a set that can, moreover, be provided within the framework of the typical staff development session or series – organizational change involves a dynamic multitude of skills that combine to enable the effective accomplishment of an organization's activity.

Personal learning: As is true of children in classrooms, groups of adults engaged in an activity are characterized by heterogeneity. Since we hold that there is not a single finite set of skills that can enable social groups' progress toward various accomplishments, this term attends to the premise that awareness among group members is necessary regarding available skills and needs with which to confront a task. People participating in social undertakings may be more productive by adopting this sort of "skill inventory" orientation than by relying on a more typical "deficit orientation, which favors the identification and remediation of people's shortcomings. Thus, there is a need for staff members to identify their skills as well as their needs, and for the participants to recognize and respond to this knowledge.

Proposed practice: A tangible, obtainable practice that is overtly agreed upon by participants in a social activity. This agreement is established by all people involved in a practice's implementation through their willingness to negotiate and through ongoing communication. Proposed practice represents an observable and measurable reflection of a system's vision. Information (see glossary, "data") and values (see glossary) influence the search for agreement regarding a proposed practice.

As an organization engages in a practice associated with a change initiative, it reflects upon the success of its efforts and the relevance of those efforts to the organizational vision. It is at the level of proposed practice that assessment and reflection on action is appropriate.

Roles and responsibilities: Specific relationships and specific tasks that individuals and groups have with respect to a practice. These relationships and tasks require clarity and are (along with other elements) subject to negotiated agreements.

Values: The hopes, beliefs, and wants that influence each participant in a human activity. These less tangible constructs combine with specialized knowledge to influence both a person's involvement in the articulation of a proposed practice and the nature of the person's level of commitment to that practice.

Vision: A fluid and abstract conception of common purposes. Loosely defined and regularly revisited, vision serves to orient perspectives, providing inspiration, inclusion, and a sense of community. Vision emphasizes progress and not an endpoint. Vision is sometimes inappropriately used as a tool or benchmark for evaluation. Though "goals" are discussed together with vision and should be linked, they are in no way interchangeable.

COMPONENT INTERACTIONS REGARDING VISION AND ACTION

The top of the model (Figure 4.2) illustrates the components of collective *Vision*, *Proposed Practice*, and the *Abstraction Ladder*. Focus on each of these elements is important as a means for grasping some important lessons about relationships between shared purposes and collective actions in social undertakings.

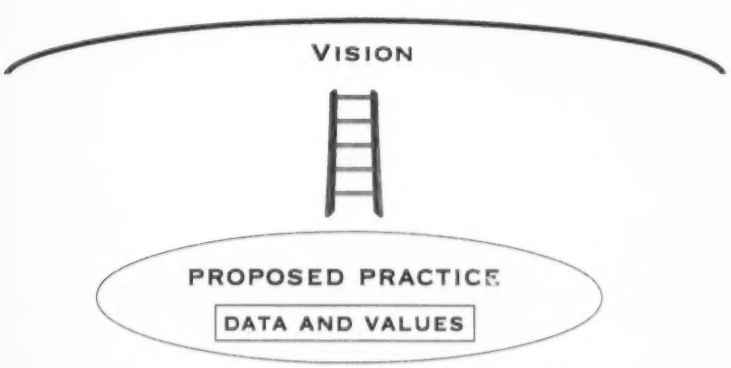
VISION

The importance of vision is commonly stressed in discussions of organizational change and development. The Shared Responsibility Framework adopts a definition that *vision* is a fluid and abstract conception of collective purpose. The framework further embraces the view that it is necessary for an organization to establish and regularly revisit a collective mission and vision of purpose. The model encourages people to avoid the common organizational pitfall of overemphasizing vision and thereby of using the concept counterproductively (Fullan, 1996). The framework establishes vision as a way to orient multiple perspectives, provide for diverse inspiration, and create an inclusive sense of community.

The discussion of community habits in Chapter Three advocated the use of vision as a means for collective inspiration. The intent of this framework, as with many change approaches, is to guide an organization in sustained movement toward a common purpose. For a vision to be most effective, it must serve as a means of orientation for those within an organization, but vision should not serve as a destination in itself (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). From this perspective, in the early stages of collective work, an organization's vision must be defined broadly enough for all to find a personal connection to it. Yet, although vision should initially be broad, it undergoes an evolution in sophistication, and, as people in an organization enjoy accumulating success with their practices, they will need to revisit and refine their vision to preserve its utility as a source of inspiration.

To apply these concepts and assertions through example, consider Emmelia Elementary, a school whose vision speaks to meeting the needs of "all" learners by adapting and differentiating instruction. With such a vision, some of the teachers may perceive differentiated instruction as meaningful and may relate to its promise, while others may find its complexity confusing and

FIGURE 4.2 THE TOP OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK: VISION, ABSTRACTION LADDER, PROPOSED PRACTICE



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challenging to their daily school experiences. One of these groups is at risk for being characterized as nonsupportive to individual needs (that is, as being labeled outside the vision). Were this to occur, those who perceived themselves to be negatively judged and their work to be thereby devalued would typically disengage from the vision and may well resist any future participation in the practices that align with the organization's aspirations. Subsequently, the people involved would likely become psychologically, and possibly physically, excluded from the organization. And such exclusion would then preempt the expansion of an initiative beyond a relatively limited core of leaders.

Alternatively, if Emmelia's vision started broadly, as exemplified by a statement such as, "All children can learn," conflict around specific practices have a more abstract reference with which to assist people in seeking practice agreements. After experiencing a sequence of specific practice successes over time – here, for instance, with experiences that indeed demonstrate how all children can learn – the vision retains a refinable quality. An evolved statement of vision in this case might take the following form: "All children learn through teaching that provides for their individual needs." Such a statement remains broad enough to allow elbow room for a variety of specific practices that community members can link to their organization's vision as they perform their work. Yet the range of the vision statement is clearly narrower than the earlier articulation of vision.

This example should begin to clarify the problems inherent in expecting too many things from vision. In short, visions, and mission statements that spring from them, can inappropriately constrict definitions of specific actions or can misguidedly become standards for evaluation. If the purpose of vision is to articulate a yet-to-be achieved future state, then it will be too abstract to define specific actions for current situation-specific challenges. Furthermore, evaluating people's daily practices against the vision introduces the peril of identifying improvements in practice as being insufficient.

Thus, in order to preserve the motivational potential of vision, its users must consciously maintain a broad and inclusive orientation in order to inspire people to remain in the discussion. Also important is the avoidance of using vision to evaluate people and their perspectives, which begs the conclusion that community members are either "inside" or "outside" the vision. Instead of using vision and people's perspectives, evaluating a practice's worth must remain focused at the "practice level," retaining focus on the concrete reality of daily actions. In other words, to use terms that may be familiar to facilitators of complex social interactions, one must "keep the *issue* the issue, and avoid making people the issue."

PROPOSED PRACTICE

Typically the source for defining daily practices is the proverbial "best practice," presumably tried and true methods and approaches that are generally defined by external sources such as government agencies, research institutions, and professional literature. The theories presented here seek in part to identify some of the limitations of relying on models for action that rest solely on best practice. Instead, the model holds that best practice is only *one* of the resources people use to define action.

To emphasize, although models relying on best practice fall short concerning situation-specific relevance, the framework does not dismiss the role of best practice. Rather, the model recognizes a fuller range of resources that people and organizations draw from when making decisions about the definition of a practice and what it will encompass. Other significant resources include personal and community *values* (which are reflective of beliefs) and *data* (which consists not only of the influences of best practice, of course, but of more local and specialized knowledge gained

through experience). These elements, values and data, are the building blocks of a *proposed practice* – a concrete, obtainable action that reconciles situational uniqueness, experience, and responsibility with best practice, and that is supported by ongoing reflection and evaluation.

Within the model, this reconciliation occurs through communication and negotiation that leads to overt agreement and clarification of personal investment. A proposed practice, that is, an innovation or initiative, must be agreed upon by members of an organization because of its relevance, meaning, and potential for success. Proposed practice represents an obtainable, commonly understood, observable and measurable reflection of the collective vision. The conception of proposed practice as a focus for school improvement is one that will likely contrast sharply with the typical experiences of educators, in which practices are normally externally prescribed and whose adoption more or less "as is" is presumed. As earlier stated, data drawn from research or experience combines with values that are reflective of community membership, and together these elements influence the search for context-relevant agreements. Successful practices are internally proposed and agreed upon through a collective and cooperative process of negotiation. This process is continuous and includes practice-focused evaluation.

To continue with the Emmelia Elementary example for the sake of application of these concepts, let's consider how members of the school develop a proposed practice that begins to provide adapted and differentiated instruction – one aligned with the vision of being "consistent with individual student needs." What exactly might that mean to a sixth grade student named Susan, to Mr. Wilson her classroom teacher, to her special education teacher Ms. Smith, and to Susan's parents Mr. and Ms. Jones? In the quest for a mutually satisfactory answer to that question, the group begins a dialogue that includes defining concrete practices that would reflect the general vision of differentiated instruction. Related questions for the group to explore include: Does Susan engage in any part of the full classroom instruction? What parts are relevant? What parts fit best? How much adaptation must occur? The members of Susan's "team" make specific agreements to begin differentiating instruction in a single academic area to make this work manageable. The area of social studies, more specifically, might seem to suggest the establishment of a "flex group" in which instruction might target key vocabulary and map reading skills presented with a visual orientation. The team could agree that the frequency of Susan's active participation in whole class discussions will be important as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of their proposed practice.

THE ABSTRACTION LADDER

The prior discussion has shown that practices are negotiated and contextually responsive, not simply prescribed. "Negotiation" in this context refers to the act of discourse between people who are overt about their personal investment in the topics of discussion. Negotiation also refers to the struggle entailed in truly seeking to achieve a common understanding and an agreement about a place to start, or a next step to take. To emphasize, the model described here puts a premium on paying attention to (not ignoring) this struggle. In addition, because evaluation is a collective effort to judge a practice's relevance and its contribution to the organization's continuous improvement, vision is an inappropriate level for evaluative endeavors. As described above, the proposed practice is the appropriate level for evaluative activity. Missing in the discussion so far, however, is a means of linking the everyday and concrete realm of proposed practice with the more ethereal and abstract world of vision.

So how do people attend to balancing the concrete relevance of practice with the more abstract inspiration of vision? To serve this end, the model draws upon the metaphor of the *abstraction ladder* (Hayakawa, 1978; Korzybski, 1933; Strayhorn, 1988). The abstraction ladder is a metaphorical and even visual device that can help a group to overtly align its actions with a broader vision,

and to move in the direction of that vision through recognition of a series of accumulated successful practices. These practices are ones that people have had an opportunity to influence and define, that have been obtainable, and that have relevance for them. When considered collectively, these practices establish ongoing attribution of successes. And this encourages personal commitment over time. The purpose of the abstraction ladder is to assist with putting practices in a context that is equally meaningful to as many participants as possible. It allows for communication in concrete terms and abstract terms simultaneously. It therefore enables attribution of successful practices in the "earthy" here-and-now to the abstract vision to which the community has subscribed as a whole. (See Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996 for additional ways to "frame" vision in meaningful ways.)

More often, organizations describe actions as a sequential set of steps that build upon one another in a linear fashion (Figure 4.3). As organizations progress through the steps, the process can become tedious and can lose its relevance to its members. The connection of each successive practice to the next – and, ultimately, to the vision – becomes an implied progression. But vision is not routinely revisited, and a problem that arises is that a vision exists in increasingly temporal distance from the recent practices that are supposed to be embodiments of that very vision. As new data becomes available – as new information is collected in the course of action, for instance – subsequent planned actions, based too rigidly on previous actions and on old information and outdated data, become less relevant than anticipated. Left unaddressed, this sequence can lead people to question not only the reform effort, but potentially the organizational vision as well.

The use of the abstraction ladder can preempt this problem by allowing people to attend simultaneously to both abstract and concrete manifestations of the vision (Figure 4.4). To stress, this bi-directional attention (up and down the ladder of abstraction) benefits collective investment by making broad goals and specific actions equally important and meaningful to as many participants as possible. The Shared Responsibility grant team has distinguished between the actions of "reference" and "attribution" in maintaining linkages between abstract and concrete aspects of its work: in some cases, *reference* (down the ladder) to more concrete terms assists in communication because the identification of concrete practices may emphasize the relevance of vision and of the more abstract elements of an organization's work; in other cases, *attribution* of actions to terms that are abstract (and higher up on the ladder) can reintroduce a sense of purpose and meaning that is greater than that which the tangible world of daily experience can normally provide. (See also Korzybski, 1933.) The metaphor of the abstraction ladder can also assist people in valuing the work of those serving different functions and those with whom they may not interact on a daily basis.

FIGURE 4.3 DEPICTION OF TYPICAL STRATEGIC CHANGE PROCESS

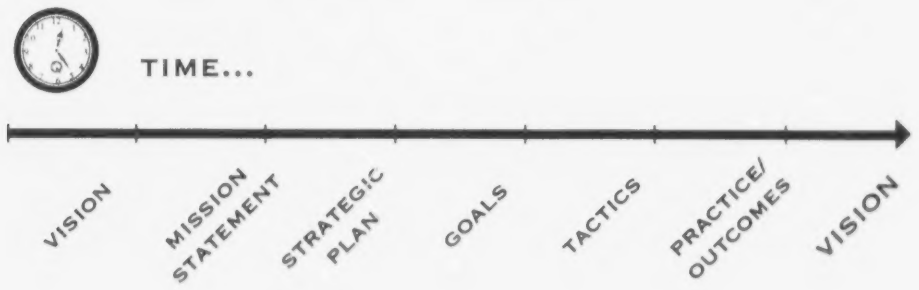


FIGURE 4.4 AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW OF A CHANGE PROCESS

MORE ABSTRACT
MORE CONCRETE
BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY
COLLABORATING TO RESPOND TO SABRINA'S NEEDS DURING MATH

To more completely consider this linkage of proposed practice and vision via the abstraction ladder, let's apply the concepts of attribution and reference by considering the work of educators such as those at Emmelia Elementary. As a group engages in seeking common answers to questions about implementing differentiated instruction, its members may, in order to maintain their investment and inspiration, need to attribute their actions back to the vision of meeting the needs of all students. This is particularly evident when significant frustration, disagreement, or conflict threatens to become unmanageable. As the team members search for definitions and agreements of practice specifics, they will refer from the vision to practices that are defined by their specific realities and investments, not just relying on what a pedagogical textbook says about how to provide differentiated instruction in mixed-ability classrooms. This situation is common to classroom or special education teachers, whose work typically requires balancing multiple demands.

SUMMARY: THE TOP OF THE MODEL

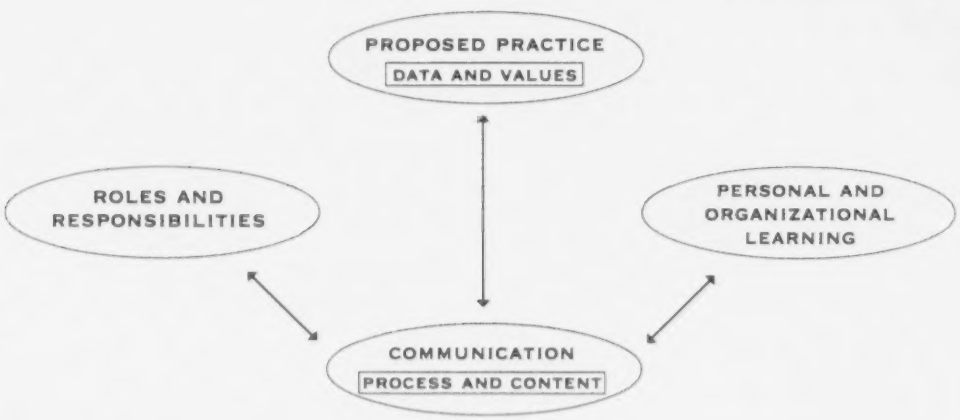
The foundation for understanding and applying the Shared Responsibility Framework is to view vision as inspirational, and to recognize that vision needs to be broad enough to enable all members of the organization to "see themselves" in it. Determining specific practices that align with the collective vision is best done through the processes of proposal and "negotiation of investment." The metaphor of the abstraction ladder assists in identifying people's maximum investment and relevance by emphasizing linkages between abstract and concrete manifestations of the work of an organization. Evaluation of a practice is important in order to help determine the following: whether outcomes based on negotiated practice are satisfactory; whether practices serve to improve organizational functioning; and whether there is continued agreement among community members regarding practices. The next section will further discuss the use of negotiation, evaluation, and the abstraction ladder, all of which occur through human communication.

COMPONENT INTERACTIONS REGARDING COMMUNICATION

The *communication* component of the Shared Responsibility Framework refers to the social context of people in relationship and interaction through organizational activity. The framework attempts to go beyond common tools or methods of communication, such as active listening, feedback, conflict resolution, and shared decision making. While necessary, these techniques are not sufficient when personal investments are strong, and when conflict among community members arises. People need to be able to discuss not only the content of the changes in which they are involved but also to discuss the process of the interchange itself. The Shared Responsibility Model focuses on communication to provide a means of understanding personal and collective relevance regarding both the *content* and *process* of change. The model embraces the view that the relevance people ascribe to an initiative is a reflection of personal and organizational investment and meaning. The model accommodates this assumption by encouraging communication that can facilitate understanding of the nature of agreements and conflicts, disagreements, and frustration about a given practice; and consideration for the roles, skills, and behaviors required to perform the practice. As Figure 4.5 reflects, communication is the component that underlies the connection of each component with the other. In the context of this model, communication refers to how people use communication as a way to understand personal investment in the search for collective agreements related to specific proposed practices, and to clarify the links those actions have to the shared vision.

Communication that incorporates the abstraction ladder serves to uncover the range of potential proposed practices that can serve as "rungs" on the ladder. Linking the communication component to all other components of the model emphasizes that the interactive relationships remain regardless of the level of abstraction discussed. The crucial factor that focuses this range of potential practices is alignment with the established vision. As practices are proposed and discussed, they are considered in the context of what are *negotiable* and *non-negotiable* aspects of the vision. For negotiation to be most productive in eliciting investment, of course, it is important to limit what is defined as non-negotiable to the most essential features that reflect the vision.

FIGURE 4.5 THE BOTTOM OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK: COMMUNICATION INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER MODEL COMPONENTS



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Again, negotiation in this model refers to the content of people's investments and the process of how they are made overt. Personal investment represents such things as the influences on individual perspectives and the focus of those perspectives. Accounting for multiple investments keeps the possibilities for action consistent with the general, inspirational vision. Additionally, this consideration for the variety and nature of community members' investments requires people to closely examine their own personal investment, because collective progress depends on people's willingness to declare what is of worth to them and to earnestly consider their willingness to be influenced by others. This perspective is similar to so-called "win-win" negotiation processes, but it acknowledges more entirely the struggles that occur when seeking shared decisions. The Shared Responsibility grant team has referred to this process as one of seeking agreements or common investment. A critical goal that this model was conceived to address is that of helping people establish practices that generate the broadest investment possible from all in the organization. Accomplishing this is what will engage people in change – the process of becoming something different.

By engaging in an agreement-oriented dialogue, members of an organization address a perceived need in a manner that generates a proposed practice. Individual members of the organization must experience that they have a "voice" in determining practices and in influencing the initiative throughout its development. A sense of reciprocity evolves from the give-and-take of establishing agreements. Individuals need to be authentically involved in defining and implementing the practices.

In negotiation processes, overt discussion regarding a practice's strengths and limitations should occur (for instance, recognizing the scope of the initiative and avoiding letting a proposed practice become a solution to every problem). Proposed practices require ongoing attention to the intent of an initiative (that is, at the abstract level) and whether (at the concrete level) actions taken actually support the need that was originally identified. An overt commitment to "stay in the communication" is required as proposed practices are established. "Staying in the communication" means that people will monitor their agreements, will keep open the possibility of further negotiations, and will seek to keep conflict on the table in a manageable, practice-oriented form – will strive to "keep the issue the issue," so to speak.

TABLE 4.2 KEY ASPECTS OF COMMUNICATION

- ORIENTING TOWARD AGREEMENT
- DISCUSSING INVESTMENT OVERTLY
- CONSIDERING A PRACTICE'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES
- ALLOWING FOR THE EVOLUTION OF PROPOSED PRACTICES
- STAYING IN THE COMMUNICATION
- MAKING CONFLICT MANAGEABLE

To apply these concepts of communication, let's return to our illustration of Emmelia Elementary and consider how these ideas might appear in a typical situation. The school, as noted earlier, has adopted a vision that includes meeting the needs of "all" students by providing adapted and differentiated instruction. Susan's teacher Mr. Wilson, her special education teacher Ms. Smith, and her parents Mr. and Ms. Jones have reached an agreement about what differentiated instruction will look like in Susan's social studies class. However, over time, Susan comes home and complains to her parents that social studies is too frustrating for her. As they ask more questions, they become concerned that Susan is not receiving the appropriate amount of adapted instruction – in line with agreements that arose from earlier group discussions. Instead of going to the school and accusing Ms. Smith and Mr. Wilson of not adapting instruction for Susan (personal references to being outside the vision) the Shared Responsibility Model provides a structure that encourages communication focused on regularly "checking in" regarding previous agreements in order to determine the agreements' continuing appropriateness and to revisit people's commitments to those agreements.

The result is that individuals are better able to maintain personal investment with the vision. The group is then able to consider contextual influences that may lead to the changes in agreement about the current practice while maintaining the collective investment of all. Perhaps, for instance, Mr. Wilson and Ms. Smith were not clear as to the amount of adaptations that they would provide to Susan, or perhaps they found the old agreement too difficult to implement. Or perhaps Mr. and Ms. Jones, upon reflection, disagree with the scope of the differentiated supports and are seeking additional adaptation. Or, perhaps Susan is responding to changes in the curriculum that now make the old adaptations less responsive to her needs. Any of these possibilities can be addressed through the model, because it emphasizes focus on communication regarding a given practice and its context, not on the people and their vision related motives.

SUMMARY: THE BOTTOM OF THE MODEL

The process of establishing a proposed practice needs to encourage a view of the initiative as evolving. In contrast, best practice approaches to change, which imply implementation of approaches and processes that are recommended by external sources, can be either embraced or, often, be resisted. "Staying in the communication" becomes a mantra within the Shared Responsibility Model: communication as envisioned in the framework and as described above is the single strongest embodiment of the model's orientation that practices (and ultimately the vision) will necessarily require revisions to reflect changing realities such as group needs, resources, and progress.

Attending to the process of communication requires people to focus on being overt about their views and needs, state their investments, and remain agreement-oriented as they seek to make the inevitable conflicts that will emerge more manageable. Attending to the content of communication requires people to keep issue, practice, and other content-laden elements separate in order to avoid evaluations of people in terms of vision. Similar attention to communication is necessary during interactions about the final two components of the model.

COMPONENT INTERACTIONS REGARDING RESOURCES, NEEDS, AND LEARNING

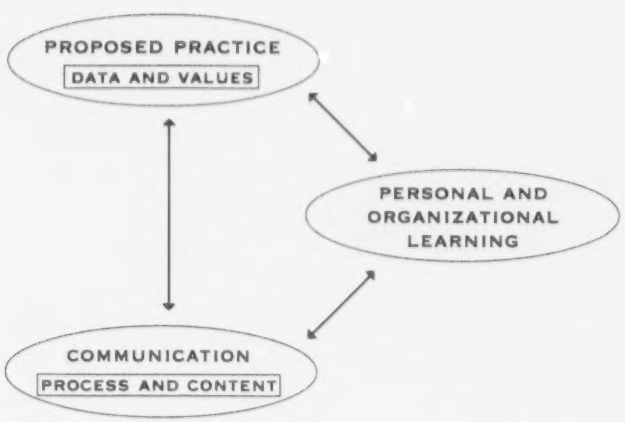
The model component *personal and organizational learning* refers to the process for determining the set of skills needed for the proposed practice and available within the organization, while taking into account the different mix of individual skills, learning needs, and styles. The importance of this component emerged from reflection upon the similarities between organizational change and

the classroom learning process. There are three significant implications that arise from this comparison. The first is that individuals learn and grow when they experience challenges that match their instructional level (that is, from situations that are not so easy as to be boring and yet not so hard as to create frustration). Ignoring this instructional level when defining the demands of a given practice (an error that may well occur, for instance, in attempts to adopt "best practices"), creates the potential for frustration that results from an inability to manage new learning in the context of current skills and previous experiences.

A second implication is that any group of learners will possess heterogeneity in skills. In the context of an initiative, the model therefore suggests that it is necessary to expect individuals and groups to engage in a practice with varying levels of sophistication. Thus, the actions that support an initiative need to address the adults' skills, styles, and needs in ways that are thoug' 'ul and balanced. The model seeks to attend to these dynamics of learning by requiring attention to the need of balancing the skills and needs that a task or initiative will require with the individual and collective learning supports and resources that are available for the ends in mind. In this way, individuals and the collective organization can operate in the "optimal instructional zone," so to speak (not too hard, not too easy). The third implication from the similarity between classroom learning and organizational change is that the participants in the process must have ownership and investment in this process to have ownership and investment in the outcome.

The model's personal and organizational learning component is most completely understood in interaction with proposed practice and communication components of the framework (Figure 4.6). This reflects the interrelatedness of learning needs and resources with the engagement of practices. The communication component draws attention to the need to articulate an individual and collective assessment of skills and learning needs associated with a practice. For example, an individual assessment may include an overt description of their comfort with the concepts of an initiative and what may be supportive to develop further confidence in application; the organiza-

FIGURE 4.6 THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK: PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER MODEL COMPONENTS



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tion in turn will consider all the resources (e.g., human, time, exemplars, etc.) present that can be applied in support of the initiative and which areas might require capacity development. The proposed practice component emphasizes the necessity of considering learning needs and resources as part of the negotiation of proposed practices.

Learning needs and resources occur at an individual level in terms of skills and understanding, and at a collective level in terms of habits and structures. As a result, practices may need to be modified as the organization matches the available skills and supports with those required for success with the practice. Enhancement of investment is likely to occur when negotiations attend to the contributions and needs of each individual as much as possible. Attending to the complexity of the proposed practice in a manner that optimizes instructional relevance allows individuals to acquire skills more comfortably, due to efforts that reflect their personal (learning) histories and ownership. It is an ongoing necessity to assess and address potential learning frustrations. Frustration is a signal that the match between an individual and their skills or resources required demands attention. The focus of this attention may need to involve modifying the introduction, negotiation, implementation, or evaluation of a given proposed practice.

Applying these concepts to Emmelia Elementary and Susan's situation, Susan's teachers (Mr. Wilson and Ms. Smith), her parents (Mr. and Ms. Jones), and Susan herself may come to the realization that changes to the previously agreed-upon differentiated social studies instruction practice requires a modification in their understanding of this practice. Perhaps Mr. Wilson has limited knowledge as to Susan's specific educational needs and requires additional awareness of her learning style. In addition, Ms. Smith's knowledge of this curriculum area may need further enhancement. Mr. and Ms. Jones may have a desire to contribute by adapting homework assignments to a computer format, but necessary timelines call for exchanges between team members that were not taken into consideration earlier. Agreements as to these newly identified needs must be established in a manner that attends to resources required and resources available (time, for instance). Any reconfiguration of the specifics can work. The framework serves to direct users' attention to possible areas for change that will keep the group moving in the desired direction – namely, in taking steps that aid in providing for Susan's unique learning needs.

SUMMARY: THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE MODEL

To reiterate, personal and organizational learning refers to a process for determining the set of skills and resources needed for the proposed practice and available from the people in the organization while taking into account the different sets of individual skills, learning needs and styles, and real resource limitations. People in an organization must be certain they are accounting for all the skills necessary and clearly determining to what extent they can accommodate heterogeneity in skills. People in an organization must also revisit how resources are used in relation to collective priorities, and must regularly reflect upon the group and individuals skills if vision-oriented improvement is to continue. Support for learning needs to be collaborative and interpersonally oriented. Working together to establish the collective sets of skills that are needed for a proposed practice requires a focus on cooperative efforts rather than directives. Further required is resilience in the face of the struggle to maintain a collective focal point that enhances investment.

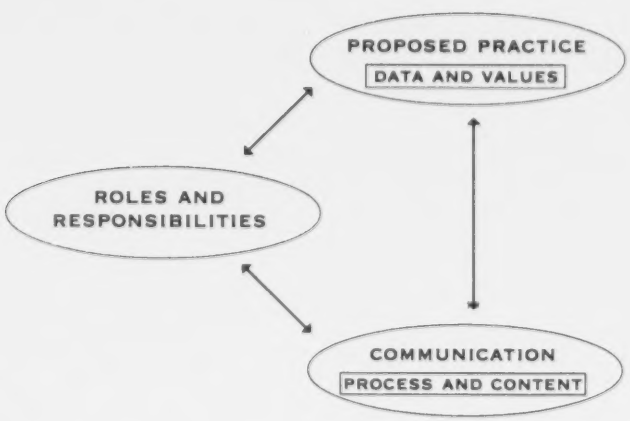
COMPONENT INTERACTIONS REGARDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ACCOUNTABILITY

When a practice is determined, fulfillment of certain tasks and obligations is also identified, just as skills and needs are inventoried, as previously discussed. The model's *roles and responsibilities* component focuses attention on this process of determining what needs to be done for any given practice and of making explicit who will do these necessary tasks. It is imperative that these decisions are not assumed or unspecified, but instead are described in a manner that promotes an understanding not only of the of the practice itself and its attending tasks, but also of accountability for them. Keeping the communication about the required roles and responsibilities overt and the dialogue comprehensive increases the likelihood for successful accomplishment of a practice.

Though contributions of each individual may be different, each individual remains tied to the implementation process through specific and delineated obligations. Understanding the relationship of roles and responsibilities to the practice is another way in which investment is addressed in this model. Effective attention to the process of establishing roles and responsibilities requires prioritizing the time for it. Unfortunately, this is typically the last part of any discussion about action. Through the dynamic, interactive organization of the model, discussion of roles and responsibilities becomes one of the major focal points of collective efforts toward group change.

This process also occurs in the context of communication about the goals and implications of the proposed practice. If the dialogue is clear, honest, and comprehensive about which individual and common roles and responsibilities are expected, and people then fulfill those agreements, the likelihood for successful practice increases. Once again, effective execution of action relies on overt agreements and on reiterative checks on the perceptions about those agreements. Communication, as discussed earlier in this chapter, enhances the group's ability to achieve these outcomes. Oftentimes in collaborative/consensus situations, agreements about general and more abstract

FIGURE 4.7 THE LEFT SIDE OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER MODEL COMPONENTS



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goals are established while decisions about specifics are assumed and detailed discussion are thought to be unnecessary. If these specific, more concrete steps toward the goal are undefined or if overt agreements and commitments are not communicated, then personal interpretation of how a practice will play out within day-to-day routines occurs, and this often leads to unnecessary problems.

The value of linking the role and responsibility component to the communication and proposed practice components is critical and warrants emphasis and discussion here. The proposed practice component draws attention to the need to articulate an individual and collective assessment of roles and associated responsibilities pertaining to a practice. The communication component, meanwhile, emphasizes the necessity of considering the individual and collective commitments to fulfill the required tasks as part of the negotiation of proposed practices. Once again the potential for the practice to be modified exists. As the organization takes stock of its members' commitments and the group's ability to fulfill roles and responsibilities, enhancement of investment is likely to occur.

To apply these concepts to a tangible situation, let's revisit Emmelia Elementary one last time and consider how the roles and responsibilities component might be used. The outcome of earlier negotiations focused on learning needs and interactions. As part of this agreement, Ms. Smith received additional responsibilities. Due to perceived preparation time constraints, it became clear that she could no longer contribute at the level previously arranged. In this interaction, the practice could be adjusted to further target a specific area of the curriculum, thus lessening the scope of required preparation time. Or the roles and responsibilities could be shifted: perhaps Mr. Wilson could agree to assume some of Ms. Smith's prior role as he develops greater understanding of Susan's learning style. And perhaps Susan, in turn, could agree to assume some of the responsibilities by establishing a peer support structure to obtain class notes.

In their discussion, the team may discover some organizational structure that serves as a barrier to providing Susan the differentiated instruction she needs over the long term. The group can now seek to negotiate a new agreement that recognizes the current reality of barriers, and can perhaps change the practice to some less ideal action. But now, the group will be working higher up on the ladder, thus able to seek to engage others in the organization in "learning" to create new and better scheduling structures in support of students whose learning needs require differentiated instruction.

SUMMARY: THE LEFT SIDE OF THE MODEL

Attending to the complexity of the proposed practice in a manner that maximizes personal leadership and influence allows individuals to more strongly uphold commitments due to their efforts reflecting personal relevance and inspiration that contributes to the collective vision. Proposed practices are not completely defined until the learning and responsibility components are each addressed.

SUMMARY OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

Organizations are places where people work in relationship with each other. Communication and collaboration are the principal ways that people conduct this collective work. As with any human interactive relationship, struggles are likely to occur and are natural. A strength of this model is hopefully apparent at this point: the Shared Responsibility Framework recognizes the messy, complex nature of change in the real world. By arranging key concepts (components) in interaction, the framework seeks to assure that overt and meaningful attention be given to significant factors influencing individual and collective relationships to a given reform effort. This attention should also lead to anticipation of conflicts involving disagreement and frustration. Over time this proactive attention will support a collective insight into the ambiguity and complexity inherent in maintaining investments in collective purpose. As a result of this perspective, it becomes necessary for the people of an organization to develop structures that accommodate group conflict to maintain momentum toward the collective vision (Perrow, 1972). To generate collective investment, and ultimately sustain it, individuals will need ongoing encouragement to address manageable conflicts (that is, focus on the proposed practice and on interacting implementation issues). As a result, one consistently negotiated procedure entailed in establishing a practice relates to the specific identification of the method that will be used to facilitate open communication regarding manageable conflicts that are bound to arise within the context of change initiatives. When such a communication method is not specified, skepticism is liable to emerge and the trust of involved individuals or groups is bound to remain limited.

Understanding the interaction of key factors that emerge in contexts of collaboration and cooperation is integral to a school community's success in trying to achieve collective goals. People in schools must figure out how to validate different realities and foci of teachers, parents, administration, and, yes, of students, too. People must seek to find the inspirational themes, common purposes, specific agreements, and individual actions that allow them to stay in the struggle together toward achieving an evolving shared responsibility. The model described here accentuates the courage required to cope with real world struggles and complexity while seeking to build a better future – particularly given the grant team's investment in wanting a better world for all children. To borrow a stock 1960s phrase, successful leaders of change must "think long-term and act short-term."

CHAPTER 5

CONTINUING THE STORY: APPLYING THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK TO THE INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE

PAUL FOSSUM
PAM TAYLOR
KURT NORDNESS

In this monograph, Chapter Two described the history and challenges of the Service Delivery Initiative, part of broader inclusive school reform at Sand Hill School. Factors hypothesized to have affected the sustainability of the initiative were analyzed in Chapter Three. From this analysis, Chapter Four presented the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*, a theoretical model that is intended to be helpful as a tool for guiding interactions in a way that leads to increasing and sustaining individual investment in a collective process. This chapter returns to Sand Hill to discuss a more recent initiative referred to as Interactive Communication and describes the process by which its leadership guided the initiative.

The development and implementation of this initiative resulted from the identification of community needs, the desire to respond proactively to these needs, and to apply lessons of the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment*. The chapter begins with an overview of the initiative, including the assumptions that guided it and the people involved. The narrative then offers a detailed description and analysis of the initiative's evolution, focusing on various episodes in the history of the Interactive Communication Initiative in order to provide a means for analyzing the focal initiative in terms of components of the Shared Responsibility Framework. The final section summarizes key learning and recommendations from this experience in relation to components of the framework.

In keeping with the core purpose of the Shared Responsibility grant, the environment described in this chapter will be familiar to readers who are working to foster school change by using inclusive educational practices. However, like the monograph, this chapter has import beyond the circle of educators whose chief interest is in sustaining inclusive educational practice. Through considering these components of the Shared Responsibility Framework, the leadership of this initiative created the conditions that invited and encouraged community members to invest in that process. This focus, which resulted from the learnings described in Chapter Three, sensitized the Interactive Communication Initiative's leadership to the importance of attending to community members' investments. The Shared Responsibility Model components provided means for pursuing this investment-building effort. The maintenance of the personal commitments of the players, built upon sensitivity to their need to retain a sense of relevance and meaning in their work, proved to be vital. To be sure, an important ingredient in the maintenance of those commitments is a clear understanding of and investment in the vision that the process embraces. But, at least as crucial is the involvement of initiative participants in communication and negotiation regarding proposed practices.

INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Earlier school surveying and interviewing efforts beyond those described within Chapter Two had identified the perceived need for improved school communication. The school community reaffirmed this concern two years later at a strategic planning retreat. The leadership of the Interactive Communication Initiative therefore sought a process through which the school might begin to communicate more effectively. They were clear that this process was not a grand-scale attempt to address each of the communication issues identified previously. Rather, the leadership viewed this as an opportunity to initiate a new way of communicating that might serve as one step toward Sand Hill's vision of improved organizational communication. This step took the form of a cyclical survey process that included numerous stakeholders.

Several key assumptions of the Interactive Communication Initiative warrant clarification here. First, the conceptual leaders of the initiative took for granted that the information gathering process would itself require a growing circle of participants as each of several planned survey cycles played out. Second, part and parcel of commitments to authentic communication and participation regarding the direction of the school, the initiative's leadership assumed that community members would benefit from a venue for providing perspectives regarding school issues. Similarly, those who conceived of the initiative clearly assumed that the process would require a common vocabulary among members of the school community – but also that the effort could in itself help to build such a vocabulary. Third, the initiative adhered to the overall grant's commitment to inclusion, and accordingly, an important assumption of the initiative's founding team (also called "the founders" here) was that a key goal was to achieve the broadest possible community participation in the communication loop that the effort was to produce: In short, all members of the community must have the opportunity to contribute their views about Sand Hill School. Thus, while the process of identifying community concerns has emphasized extensive use of surveys and focus groups – both familiar tools in educational settings – perhaps the most remarkable part of the Interactive Communication Initiative's information-gathering effort is that it has routinely extended not only to the teaching faculty and students' parents (more typical targets of school communication strategies), but also to the non-certified staff and students in kindergarten through sixth grade. In short, the effort has therefore been unusual because it has reached out to include community members whose participation in school governance has traditionally come from the margins at best. The focus did not stop with inclusive participation in this interactive communication loop. The initiative's leadership also sought ways for the leadership itself to be more inclusive. And, as a result, the parent on another key group (called the "action team" here) took a strong leadership role, and later in the process some students played key leadership roles in a part of the reporting process to students and in designing some actions related to a portion of the survey results.

Some identification here of the initiative's vital groups and the actors within them will lay the groundwork for the description and analysis that follows. The founding team mentioned above consisted of three people, including one parent from the community, a university staff member, and the principal of Sand Hill Elementary, all of whom were concurrently engaged as members of the grant's overall activities. A consulting team (also called "the consultants") comprised of two education and research specialists, assisted the founding team at early stages in clarifying protocols related to survey design, administration, and analysis. One of these specialists was a university researcher who had been directly involved with all the grant efforts; the other was a consulting data analyst with the central administration of Sand Hill School's home district. The initiative's action team, also briefly mentioned above, included a parent and two teachers at the school that the founding team approached and enlisted in order to develop the survey for the purpose of identifying areas of strength and areas for attention and improvement at Sand Hill. The action team

also assumed responsibility – in consultation with both the founding team and the consultants – for directing the survey analysis and reporting processes. Further, in order to take action in response to the needs that the community identified via the survey, the action team ultimately took the lead in facilitating negotiations among various school groups. Table 5.1 provides this information in an abbreviated fashion and outlines other characteristics of the initiative's makeup and administration.

TABLE 5.1 OVERVIEW OF THE INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE PARTICIPANTS AND PROCESSES

ASPECTS	AIMS
INFORMATION-GATHERING COMPONENTS:	
• Pilot surveys: some parents, students, staff	• To test the feasibility and expand the inclusivity of a typical information-gathering tool
• Focus groups I: some parents, students, staff	• To identify topics of general concern
• Survey: all parents, staff, grade 4-6 students	• To gather Likert-style and open-ended responses of participants on topics identified during focus groups
• Focus groups II: a majority of grade K-3 students	• To ensure input of youngest students, thus overcoming the impracticality of survey approach at these levels
• Focus groups III: parents, staff, grade 4-6 students	• For comparison of quality of focus group vs.survey responses
REPORTING:	
• Letters, calls	• To inform focus group participants of progress
• Initial newsletter entries	• To provide brief and timely feedback on learning from broad survey actions
• School board report (part of a larger reporting)	• To connect the Interactive Communication Initiative to district initiatives
• Report to school tactics teams	• To connect information yielded through Interactive Communication activities to existing school structures
• Segmented newsletter entries	• To provide in-depth but user-friendly analyses derived from surveys, focus groups II and III
PRIMARY PARTICIPANTS:	
• Founding team of three	• 3 people associated with main grant activities: 1 parent, 1 administrator, 1 university-based
• Action team of three	• Enlisted by founders: 2 teachers, 1 parent
• Two research and assessment consultants	• 1 university-based grant associate & 1 district contract worker for statistics and analysis
PLANNING VENUES:	
• Founding team/action team meetings	• One but not both of the teams of 3; strategy
• Planning sessions	• Founding plus action groups; negotiation
• Committee of the whole	• All key players; consultation

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS: BUILDING A PROCESS FOR ONGOING INTERACTION

This section reviews each of several general phases of the Interactive Communication Initiative effort: the conception of the idea of interactive communication as a means for developing a durable and inclusive school leadership process, the initiation of an information-gathering plan, the expansion of the team involved in working on this project, and the involvement of the community as the project moved forward.

CONCEPTION

The conception of the initiative provides an illustration of overt uses of the Shared Responsibility Framework and the ways these uses benefited collaboration on the Interactive Communication Initiative. With the history of the Service Delivery Initiative fresh in their minds, the leadership of Interactive Communication sought to implement a plan that might be perceived as more genuinely reflective of all community perspectives, and might allow enough flexibility that community members could create their own relevance and meaning. That is, by creating an approach that would provide broad definition and direction and while allowing enough pliancy for individuals to respond to the unique needs of each situation, the leaders sought to engender investment in the initiative.

The imprecise nature of vision and mission should necessitate communication, not preempt it. And, in keeping with this assertion, through the communication that the budding Interactive Communication Initiative required, the motives and the personal interests of the initiative's participants became clearer. In the founding team's early discussions about personal needs and interests, the school's principal made clear, for instance, his hope that the work of the initiative could ensure the survivability of grant-supported change efforts beyond the life of the grant and avoid the regrettable but common situation in which an externally-driven initiative leaves the site "without a trace." The parent member of the founding three, meanwhile, expressed her compelling interest that the initiative might model an inclusive leadership philosophy; participants in the initiative could do this, she noted, by ensuring the meaningful participation of all of the school's constituent populations, which meant involving students and general staff members in addition to the parents and certified teachers who are more typically involved in participatory leadership initiatives. Finally, the university-based researcher identified his interest not only in benefiting the school in general, but, more selfishly, in personal growth as an educational researcher as well. To this end, the Interactive Communication Initiative could provide meaningful involvement with educational practitioners. This motive also implied systematic application of methods for tapping and analyzing community perspectives. These examples all illustrate that, as the Shared Responsibility Framework suggests, overt communication regarding roles and responsibilities can contribute to the productivity of negotiations and proposals for specific practices.

The preceding example warrants some additional analysis. Strong organizational decision making is often characterized (e.g., Caplow, 1983) as bold, decisive, self-assured, and, above all, having a clear blueprint for change. Latitude for flexibility is deemed unnecessary, if not a sign of flagging institutional fortitude. "If people will just work very hard on the blueprint," the theory goes, "agreements down the road will not be necessary, because we're all working on a plan we agreed upon in the first place." But, with the lessons in mind from the grant's investigation of the Service Delivery Initiative, the founding team of the Interactive Communication Initiative rejected that kind of self-assured leadership stance in favor of a more speculative approach. Accordingly, the budding initiative plan, as the previous paragraph suggests, subscribed only to a very general

articulation of vision rather than to a specific blueprint for action. This was useful in practice because, due to the lack of specificity of the group vision, the three founding members undertook their collaborative effort by taking nothing for granted about each others' commitments to the process they were initiating. Specifically, with respect to the example provided above, the members of the founding team selected a survey process that they agreed should be iterative or repeated in order to help it gain a long-term foothold in the community. But the agreement was otherwise loosely defined in terms of specific content.

This conception of the process is therefore noteworthy because it adopts an important element of the Shared Responsibility Framework, chiefly, the tenet that vision does not translate into action in any direct sense, because each participant in a community will "flesh out" that vision differently. The "nuts and bolts" of the various interpretations of a vision are different, and this lack of common definition can help to maintain the individual investments of the separate members. In the Interactive Communication Initiative, for example, the project was intended to be iterative or repeated, so it reflected the school principal's concern that the effort would be durable. Because the participants consciously agreed that the survey's administration must extend to all groups within the school, the plan maintained the investment of the parent member as it reflected the ideological moorings of the grant as a whole. And, because the founders agreed that the iterative process should utilize survey methodology, the initiative was responsive to the interests of the team's university-based researcher. In this way, the lack of specificity in the vision that the founding team had originally agreed to pursue preserved the viability of the initiative at this important formative stage: it did so, in short, by leaving enough "elbow room" within which the group could accommodate the disparate commitments of each of the individuals involved and could allow for the discovery of the ways in which the variety of motives were in fact harmonious.

As mentioned, there were other overt applications of the Shared Responsibility Framework. At the conception stage, the framework informed the work of the initiative's leadership most clearly by providing the founding members of the Interactive Communication Initiative with visual imagery and language that were useful aides during the challenging interactions that surrounded the initiative's conception. Specifically, the abstraction ladder enabled understanding of the individual investments of members as manifestations of a common general goal. The Shared Responsibility Model provided a kind of metacommunication – a way of talking about talking. This bolstered the participants' ability to recognize a number of things: when and how to focus discussion on specific issues, when to step back in order to gain refreshing perspective on an issue, and how to productively remind themselves of a familiar perspective that has somehow become lost or dulled in the hurly-burly of daily work. In practice, this meant that members of the initiative's founding team might, for instance, ask, "Can you come down the ladder for me?," signifying that the broader goals weren't adequately suggestive of action at more private or individual-specific levels. This was an invitation for a collaborator to express proposals for practice by referring to specific actions that could have more individual and personal meaning.

How is a request to "come down the ladder" more useful or expressive than a more familiar question like, "Can you be more specific?" In some ways, the differences appear trivial, just a matter of semantics. Yet semantics – words – are the chief medium by which people conduct their business in social contexts. In the founding team's collaborative circle, reference to the abstraction ladder consistently moved that team toward much-needed discussion of practice at the "street level" while maintaining the team members' sense of connection to the larger community. Further, the term "specific" can itself become hackneyed, and requests for specificity seem often to arise in exasperation. Also, "the specifics" of a plan often take a front seat to the more general linkages a

plan has that associate human work with the identity of the community within which that work is undertaken. Educators seem to express a proclivity to neglect things that are general or abstract in favor of the many concrete and specific classroom-level details that (quite naturally and understandably) preoccupy them. Most professional educators will have little trouble recalling discussions of school "vision" at which the impatience of some teachers is palpable: the drumming of fingers at faculty "strategy" sessions, or the nervous eyeing of the clock at meetings about the mission statement. These are among the common signs that teachers feel they have duties more pressing than the vision.

Yet, the artificial distinction between the abstract and the concrete runs rough shod over the ideal that the educative process should have value at both the general community level and at the specific level of individual practice. The Shared Responsibility Framework suggests that it is inappropriate to view the realm of the general and abstract as superior to the concrete and specific. The leaders of the Interactive Communication Initiative have found it useful to remember how the specifics and the generals can be manifestations of a single thing. Specifically, the abstraction ladder clearly provided the founders of the initiative with a tool, an image, that makes purposeful the connection between abstract and concrete more possible. Lest the use of imagery seem trivial, arcane, or otherwise deterring, it is informative to consider a different analogy that is also visual in nature. Ann Morrow Lindbergh (1955) has aptly tied the imagery of a ballroom dance to the challenges of another complex social institution, marriage, in her book *Gift from the Sea*. By holding too tightly, Lindbergh noted, a dancer risks arresting the pulse and flow of the music; too lightly, and the partners will not move at all in concert. The same imagery seems helpful in understanding the balance between broad goals and specific actions that is necessary to maintain the momentum and integrity of a collaborative initiative. The challenge, in short, is to provide for the continued dedication of the initiative's key individuals while adhering to goals that bind those principals as members of a common community – to sense how to grasp one another just closely enough, while, in a sense, undertaking a dance of collaboration.

INITIATION

The group that conceived the Interactive Communication Initiative envisioned an iterative, cyclical survey process, one that might encourage the "routinization" at Sand Hill of a strategy for broad and inclusive communication and response. The initiative therefore derived its name from this plan to build a process by which information could be better communicated among community members and by which that information might contribute to improvements at Sand Hill School, thus encouraging the generally higher levels of discourse and communication that are features of responsive and otherwise healthy schools. Specifically, the idea for such a survey process responded to a number of perceived needs. Among them were the refinement and the regularization of a survey process as a means of engaging more broadly-based school leadership, and more focused action on at least two other elements (specifically, related to "school communication" and "quality education") that had been articulated in the context of the school's site-planning event, which had been conducted several months before the Interactive Communication Initiative commenced. The hope was that the school could establish a communication process for identifying – via the broadest possible input – school strengths and challenges, and for reporting these strengths and challenges to the school community with an eye on genuine improvement. This orientation regarding the purpose of surveying represented a shift with respect to prior surveying activities conducted within the school community. Those past efforts had focused on soliciting opinions and perspectives; but, beyond gathering information on the school's climate, the planned

uses of past surveys were open-ended and unclear. In contrast, the leadership of the Interactive Communication Initiative charged itself to attend to the survey process as a potential communication tool, as a means for giving people an authentic opportunity to shape governance and decision making within the Sand Hill School, and, so, as a way to spur the investment of members of the Sand Hill community in their school.

The preceding discussion has stressed that Interactive Communication Initiative was to be *iterative* and *cyclical*. This claim warrants clarification. Cuban (1990) joins others in noting the cyclical nature of reform efforts, and states that the frustrating reality appears to be that few seemingly worthwhile initiatives "substantially alter the regularities of schooling" (p. 11). A disconcerting implication of Cuban's observation is that the most predictable aspect of educational reforms may precisely be the *unpredictability* of such efforts in terms of both their durability and efficacy. But the Shared Responsibility Framework embraces the cyclical tendencies of school reform. The Interactive Communication Initiative has attempted to loosely harness the fleeting and paradoxical element of school reform that Cuban has identified. In a sense, participants in the initiative have sought answers to the arresting question, "What are the advantages of unpredictability?" Among the learnings that have emerged from the Interactive Communication effort are some plausible answers to that question, answers which support the framework. Specifically, commitment to a process of "negotiation" within a climate of flexibility is in itself an important and constructive goal. Rigid blueprints for sweeping change tend to violate the worthwhile ideals of individual commitment and broad-based community participation in education. In practice, such negotiation and flexibility requires continuous communication regarding the needs of those engaged and regarding the day-to-day roles and responsibilities necessary to propel change and improvement. The Interactive Communication Initiative's experience also suggests that revisiting the community vision is important – not as it would be important for a builder to consult a master plan in order to evaluate progress or to generate future steps, but as a way of maintaining, through the inspiration the vision is intended to provide, the momentum necessary to spur the community in its work toward improvement. "Improvement," after all, is itself an abstract goal. Can it be productive to expect uniformity in the way people envision bringing that worthwhile goal to fruition, and to operate in ways that take such uniformity for granted? Interactive Communication and the Shared Responsibility Framework answer, "No."

Given the challenges associated with building a broad system of school governance, the founding team set out to develop a way to genuinely involve students, parents, and staff members in a communication process that could result in responsive leadership and governance action. A premise of the Interactive Communication Initiative process is that each voice in a school community deserves to be heard, and that the power of listening to each voice can result in a more responsive, more caring, and higher quality school experience. Thus, the purpose of the initiative effort was to explore the potential of one possible strategy in seeking out and responding to the voices of the school community. The strategy in question, to stress, gave special attention to the participation of those who have previously been overlooked, including all staff, parents, and students. The inclusive focus of the initiative, however, was not on the classroom. Instead, the project has promoted the inclusion of all students – together with their parents and with teachers as well as other staff members – in school *leadership*.

Although the vision of the Interactive Communication Initiative is not limited to the use of surveys, the founding team became interested in the prospect of surveying the school community on a regular basis in order to help build an environment in which the free flow of information is encouraged (Wheatley, 1992). The general goals and ideological moorings of the initiative, as

described above, are evident in the way the initiative's leadership conceived and implemented its community surveying processes. The use of separate but parallel forms of the survey enabled the meaningful participation of the broadest possible sets of community members and therefore supported a key objective. One of the most challenging and unique aspects of the survey development effort was involving the students at every turn in the information gathering process. And, though the initiative's pilot efforts had confirmed how challenging it can be to ensure student participation in a survey process, the pilot phase also demonstrated that the students provide information that parents and the staff cannot. By this measure alone, then, the student perspective has emerged as an important voice at Sand Hill School.

EXPANSION

A key goal of the Interactive Communication Initiative, as mentioned, was to involve an ever-expanding group in the process. The initiative's expansion began in earnest during the summer of 1996, after the completion of the pilot survey activity. The process that eventually extended to the broad swath of the school population that participated in the survey began with smaller groups assembled in order to help develop and carry out that survey. The identification within the introduction to this chapter of the various groups involved in interactive communication is intended in largest part to bring clarity to the analysis here. But that passage also begins, in itself, to illustrate the broadening of authentic participation that was at the heart of the initiative's intent. The founding team felt that particular aspects of this expanding participation anchored the initiative in some important respects.

With respect to the consultants, involving a district assessment and evaluation expert promised to increase the likelihood that he would be familiar with and more supportive of the ongoing process after the life of the grant. Ultimately, through the association of the Interactive Communication Initiative with district specialists and with the district's own general initiatives, the effort did benefit from higher visibility and from enhanced access to district resources. Similarly, the university-based survey specialist and the interactive communication founders sought to involve had participated in prior grant activities, and understood the Shared Responsibility Framework. This helped the founding team to establish that the initiative's aims harmonized with the purposes of the grant, also facilitating the view that the considerable investment of time and energy was an effort worth supporting.

Early meetings between the founding team and the consultants produced the agreement that relatively quick efforts to involve other staff and parent members would be necessary to ensure the initiative's momentum. By expanding at that time, all agreed that the effort would begin to grow from its grant-supported origins in the hopes of penetrating the school community's habits more completely. On this basis, the founding team identified several potential candidates from the community for involvement on the action team. From this list of potential participants, the founding team selected three people to approach in order to enlist their participation. These three potential participants had demonstrated dedication and leadership in other school improvement efforts. All three had some history of involvement with school improvement efforts, and, based on the experiences of the founding team's members, were comfortable with a certain level of ambiguity and flexibility, important attributes with respect to the strong element of negotiation that the founders knew the initiative would require in its early phases. Further, the founders were happy with the mix of perspectives that the three could bring to the process – those of parent, classroom teacher, and specialist. Most importantly, because the three had demonstrated leadership within the school community, the members of the founding team felt comfortable investing their own commitments and interests as leaders in support of this wider circle of potential leaders.

Appropriate steps at this point therefore did *not* include "going wholesale" with the initiative by involving the community at large. Instead, the founding team recognized the delicacy and complexity inherent in the task of sharing their vision for the expansion of school communication, given past experiences launching school initiatives, in particular, the Service Delivery Initiative described in Chapter Two. To preempt the alienation and lack of investment that had resulted with that initiative, the founding team sought to allow for the development and articulation of local meaning in order to nourish a sense that the plan was a set of *proposed practices* rather than a directive consisting of prescribed practices. To do this, the founding team pursued a strategy of broadening the leadership of the Interactive Communication Initiative process incrementally (by first approaching three other members of the school community). In initial contacts with these three people, the founding team considered it essential to communicate to them the key themes of its vision, but to do so without overwhelming the potential participants with references to the negotiation and theorizing that had shaped our effort. Instead, it seemed critical to facilitate the thinking of the three people whom the founding team hoped to enlist about *their own* vision for this process. This required the founding team to temper its investments in how the process might best unfold, and to recognize that the community members whom the founders were approaching would want to have ownership for a vision as well. At the same time, the members of the founding team also felt it was important to help the three potential participants to connect their vision for expanded communication to elements of the mission of building a more inclusive community through the broad and ongoing exchange of concerns regarding the school community. Along these lines, the founding team's commitment to broad inclusion of all of the school's constituent groups, of course, was the primary non-negotiable element.

In describing the Interactive Communication Initiative to the three potential participants, the founding team's members connected the initiative to the school's newly developed site plan, which had generated "tactics" regarding, among other issues, the improvement of school communication and the pursuit of enhanced educational quality. Further, the founders and the potential participants discussed the pilot process that the founding team had conducted. Framing the participation of the potential action team as an invitation was critical. The would-be participants needed to choose their involvement, not to feel that their help was somehow mandated or expected. The timeline for responding was intentionally clear-cut. Also well defined were the areas of the project that would be negotiable and those that would not.

Non-negotiable aspects were intentionally limited. The founding team made it clear that the term of the action team's participation would be a single year. The founders also made it clear that, although the action team would have considerable latitude in directing the survey's development and administration, ongoing contact with the founding team would be necessary. Specifically, the founders noted that, due to their relationship with the Shared Responsibility grant, the members of the founding team were obliged to track and record the action team's progress. The meeting also featured overt discussion of other methods for gathering input about the school site plan progress with an eye on identifying priority topics for the survey. The founding team did not consider the plan to use a survey as a primary approach for gathering community input to be negotiable. The founding team acknowledged a number of reasons for adopting the survey format. First, the survey approach was a familiar format to the school community while other aspects of the process would be much less familiar. Further, the pilot process had involved a survey. Moreover, the founding team expressed its desire to include parents, staff, and students; this would require the use of parallel survey forms, asking questions that were similar, but adjusted to suit the profiles and perspectives of those constituencies of the school community.

Using documentation from the pilot process, the founding team and the action team candidates proposed and discussed roles, responsibilities, and tentative timelines, noting that these aspects of the project were open to ongoing negotiation. The founding team, in fact, made it clear that if the potential action team members accepted the invitation to become involved in the Interactive Communication Initiative process, ongoing dialogue about the process itself was not only welcomed but would be critical to the success of the undertaking. Discussion also featured considerable attention to personal learning needs. When the action team candidates inquired about the possible use of focus groups to supplement the survey process, for example, discussion produced the agreement that those involved in leading the initiative would likely need to learn more about effective focus group facilitation. Throughout its conversation with the action team candidates, the founding team attempted to connect the proposed practices with the vision of broad-based inclusive school leadership. And the founding team also articulated the need to periodically check for alignment with that vision: in short, the need for ongoing communication was, by design, a strong theme of the discussion.

As the dialogue drew to a close, all three community members indicated their desire to become part of the Interactive Communication Initiative's action team, and they expressed their excitement about what the project might mean for the school. In the course of the enlistment of an action team, components of the Shared Responsibility Framework appeared to foster the successful engagement of these three people in the process. The new action team embraced the idea of proposing and negotiating practices related to the survey process, and of maintaining ongoing communication. Hearing the perspectives of the broad school community increased the prospect of developing agreed-upon practices that would attend to the community's need for improvement. For this group, the process of more clearly defining those roles and responsibilities was unequivocally important.

By design, the founding team extended to the action team considerable decision-making latitude. And, early on, the action team exercised this latitude in a number of ways. One of the first significant decisions by the action team, for instance, concerned the identification of an effective and authentic way of narrowing the focus of the proposed survey to a more manageable number of general community concerns. By doing so, the action team felt that the planned survey would have an element of focus that would contribute to its usefulness as a template for action toward genuine change. To this end, the action team decided to conduct focus groups with students, parents, and staff members. Issues identified in the groups would then become the basis of more in-depth and extensive surveying later in the process. The action team also decided to secure the services of an outside specialist to conduct the focus groups. A third important decision that the action team exercised early on involved challenges associated with focus groups; these issues stemmed specifically from constraints regarding the size and profile of the focus group participants. Especially given the inclusive philosophy that underpinned the Interactive Communication effort, the fact that focus groups are in a sense exclusive by nature was a quandary. In keeping with the parameters of a focus group format, starting small was important, yet in some respects, this contradicted the broad inclusion that was the underlying ideology. The action team responded by carefully considering the ethnicities, abilities, and genders of those they invited to the focus group phase. If not through breadth in numbers of participants, then, the action team could pursue inclusive practices through securing a breadth of perspectives. Similarly, they considered it important to involve in the staff focus group sessions a balanced and representative cross-section that would include classroom teachers, certified staff, support staff, and other staff members such as kitchen and custodial staff members. With the number of staff in the school numbering close to 100, this was no small task.

Two themes that emerged from the focus groups suggested linkage with school improvement tactics already identified through the school's district-facilitated stra tgic planning activities: one was identified as "home/school communication" and the other as "quality education." Thus, in the same way that the district assessment specialist's involvement (as described above) constituted a means of boosting the school's centrality within the district, the Interactive Communication Initiative was also able to promote its centrality within the school by serving as a vehicle for leveraging important existing efforts. The prospect of using the Interactive Communication process as a means of reinforcing these school concerns and of sparking progress on those existing tactics was therefore identified early. The initiative benefitted from this linkage later with respect to the reporting of survey results that the project undertook.

Soon after digesting the focus group reports, the action team met with the founding team and the two consultants. The task at hand at this point was to draft surveys in several different forms. Again, this multi-form survey plan reflected the inclusive approach to school governance that the founders promoted and that the action team also embraced: various forms of the instrument were to be suitable for use respectively by school staff and parents, and by as many students as was feasible. The founding team members' experiences from the pilot survey process undertaken in the prior school year, together with the classroom experience of the veteran teachers on the action team, supported the conclusion that students younger than fourth graders could not participate meaningfully in a written survey process. But, in order to remain faithful to the goal of extending participation in leadership to all corners of the school community, the founding team ultimately conducted special kindergarten through third grade focus groups based on the survey that emerged. (These are called "Focus Groups II" on Table 5.1, as opposed to the focus groups assembled to identify the survey topics themselves, identified as "Focus Groups I" on that table.)

With respect to the drafting of the survey, the founding team made the consultants readily available to address the action team's learning needs regarding survey construction and administration. The founding team also availed itself to the action team, since the founders felt that their experience in developing and administering the pilot survey might be of use. The founding team in fact provided copies of the parallel forms of the pilot instrument. The founders' most pointed advice was that the two adult forms of the survey, intended for the parents and the staff members, might follow most easily if the action team were to develop the student survey form first. Yet, in a general effort to avoid implying that the pilot survey must serve as a strict model, the founders avoided pushing this advice too firmly.

INVOLVEMENT

The process of drafting and redrafting the survey in its development phase – a task that promised to be tedious in any event – witnessed considerable commitment on the part of the action team. And the team's dedication ultimately carried the task to completion in spite of episodes that threatened the group's continuing investment in the process. Some dilemmas that the Interactive Communication Initiative encountered in its work to implement change warrant considerable attention here.

The founding team's members had, as just mentioned, offered their assistance as experienced resource people, drawing on the survey development experience they had gained during the pilot survey process. Instead, at a relatively early juncture – and quite without prompting from the founding team – the action team moved to expand the circle of community members in order to respond to their need for additional expertise in the development of the survey. Specifically, the action team reached out to two members of the wider school community, one of whom had in fact assisted in the development of a parent survey that Shared Responsibility had spearheaded at Sand Hill several years earlier.

To frame the scenario in one way, from the viewpoint of the founding team, the action team's effort to involve others in the initiative at this point was a good news/bad news proposition. The good news, in part, was that the action team seemed to demonstrate understanding of a core Interactive Communication goal. In a sense, this involvement of new participants, incremental though it was, replicated the expansion that the founding team had initiated when it enlisted the action team in the first place. Thus, the action team's engagement of two new members seemed to represent an endorsement of the founding team's beliefs – specifically, that an important key to reinforcing the durability of the Interactive Communication Initiative lay in fostering the stepwise growth of the circle of community members involved.

The primary challenge of involving new participants at this point from the view of the founding team (the "bad news," that is) was that the draft survey that emerged resembled, in both form and content, the survey that the school had administered several years earlier. Consequently, the working survey draft bore considerably less resemblance to the pilot survey that the founding team had developed and administered, and that the founders had suggested was a good example of how an instrument could extend opportunity for meaningful involvement to all members of the community. This development was particularly striking to the founding team because, as mentioned, the members of that team felt that an entirely different ideology – an ideology that promoted inclusion and that fostered the establishment of authentic participation in school leadership – distinguished the Interactive Communication survey vision from the motives that underlie typical surveys. The founders viewed the school's older survey process as valuable but more "typical," as was the draft that emerged from the action team's work. Further, in progressing toward the development of a three-form survey (for parents, staff, and students), the action team first produced the survey form that was intended for the parents; according to comments of the members of the team, they felt that the survey forms intended for the students and the staff members would flow freely from their parent draft. This conflicted with the experience and advice of the founding team – intentionally soft-peddled though that advice had been – that the student form had proven to be very demanding in the pilot phase. A principal challenge of the pilot development process, for instance, had related to translating survey language to a level that was appropriate for elementary school students. The founders' suggestion was that it may therefore be easiest for the action team to work "backward" from the student form, so to speak, by creating survey forms for the two adult constituencies based on the student form. In short, in the view of the founding team members, their suggestion was valid especially because it had been based on the "hard knocks" of experience.

Also, the action team's widening of the circle at this juncture was noteworthy in that it came as a surprise at such an early stage. It was unexpected that the action team had, without consulting the founding team, moved ahead with decisions regarding when and how to involve other community members in the effort. In short, this contributed to the ambiguity of the founding team's reaction. The founding team faced a dilemma, then. On the one hand, from the perspective of the founders, it appeared that the project may have begun to stray from the vision that conceived it. And ironically, although the members of the founders had been concerned chiefly about maintaining the investments of the action team they had enlisted, the slippage of alignment seemed more directly to threaten the continuing investment of the founders themselves. On the other hand, in confronting the perceived slippage of alignment with the vision, the members of the founding team were tempted to invoke the initiative's vision as an evaluative device along these lines: "You [on the action team] are not drafting your surveys with our [the founding team's] experiences from the pilot process in mind, and that is incorrect." But the Shared Responsibility Framework suggests

that such evaluative uses of vision are untenable because they rely on a favoring of one specific and limited interpretation of abstract vision (that of the evaluators), and, in so doing, evaluation per organizational vision discredits other interpretations of the vision thus disenfranchising the efforts of those who embrace it. In sum, from the founders' vantage, while there was happiness that the circle was expanding and that the initiative appeared to have positive momentum, there was apprehension within the founding team that the initiative may have changed direction in ways that disregarded the founders' experience and their relationship to the project.

The lessons of past grant analysis had strongly suggested the delicacy of maintaining meaningful involvement. A key requirement of a school change effort, the grant experience had further suggested, is that the individual motives of all participants must be nurtured and maintained. Without such a perspective-sensitive approach, frustration can emerge as plans begin to lack the clarity that individuals require – and that they begin to establish for themselves – as they make decisions regarding their action. Strong-handed intercession on the part of the founding team may have communicated to the action team some lack of trust. This may, as a result, have bred some of that genre of frustration. Unmanageable conflict, too, can emerge as competing goals and motives collide. Ultimately, just as the Shared Responsibility Framework had suggested, overt communication was essential. When the action team's investment in the survey initiative appeared more stable and, thus, when points of potential conflict were at a more manageable level, the founders used the abstraction ladder as a tool for revisiting the initiative's vision and for enriching understanding of how the work that both the founding team and the action team had undertaken were linked to that same vision. The founding team had to move "up the ladder" in order to appreciate that the action team's efforts were indeed reflective of the more abstract goal of building an "ever expanding" circle of involvement within the community. Moving "down the ladder" to more concrete levels of practice helped the founders remind the action team of the founding team's own roles and responsibilities – in short, of their need to be involved in the plans.

The point of this anecdote is not that frustration and conflict can and should be avoided. The founding team's experience from the grant had demonstrated that both frustration and conflict are typical byproducts of collaboration toward change. The members of the founding team, however, had reasoned that they should not – based on poorly understood assumptions about the action team's intentions – interfere with the initiative's progress in ways that might make conflict seem unmanageable. Increases in frustration or a growing sense of unmanageable conflict could have had a significant impact on the level of commitment held by any of the participants. Analysis suggests that the involvement of two new community members at this early point did have important effects on the survey that emerged. Although the effects of this participation were in some respects challenging to the common investments of the founding team's members, the widening of the circle at this point did not derail the initiative.

KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: NURTURING PARTICIPATION IN AN INCLUSIVE INITIATIVE

As the Interactive Communication Initiative has progressed, the founding team has applied lessons that the overall Shared Responsibility project had provided on account of its involvement at Sand Hill. In some cases, the Shared Responsibility Framework suggested means for action, and the participants in the initiative applied the model quite consciously and overtly. In other cases, past challenges were instructive as examples of what to do and what to avoid in pursuing new efforts. Experience, reflection, and revised action while in the trenches, that is, had helped the founding team learn to internalize methods of operating. These lessons, too, were consistent with and

informed by the framework. This section addresses some of the key learnings that have emerged from the experiences of the initiative's leadership. Educational practitioners will recognize the potential applicability to their own situations of these experiences and observations.

In short, the key learnings summarized below correspond to the following recommendations, and in this order:

- ***Enable participants to "see themselves" in an initiative*** by employing a link between vision and practice;
- ***Attend to conflict*** productively through overt communication;
- ***"Step down" from vision to action, yet revisit the vision*** in order to harness community data and values;
- ***Respond to individual participants' needs*** for learning and other support; and
- ***Seek authenticity*** by creating opportunities that invite individual investments and make change more meaningful and genuine.

ENABLE PARTICIPANTS TO "SEE THEMSELVES" IN AN INITIATIVE

The preceding description of the Interactive Communication Initiative has illustrated two ways in which a project's leadership was able to preserve the durability and the utility of their initiative. First, it is helpful to suspend the natural tendency to address too specifically the particulars of a plan in its formulation. Discipline in avoiding specific discussion leaves time for team members to construct their own picture about the potential of a plan and, so, to develop personal dedication to a group endeavor. Second, following this conscious suspension of detailed planning, the initiative identified more specific actions in terms of personal actions, but did so by using imagery as a tool to reinforce the sense that specific and private actions flowed from the vision. This constituted a reminder that actions are ultimately bound together with general goals that support an institutional mission. The Interactive Communication Initiative has differed from typical visioning processes that are based on strategic planning models. In their understandable quest for "action," more typical reform approaches emphasize progress from general to specific, and, thus, tend to leave reference to abstract goals behind in search of ever narrower steps. The most common and palpable result of a visioning process, perhaps, is a wall plaque that states the mission and that serves as a symbol of the visioning effort. But such relics – fixed and immutable by their very nature – don't invite conscious reappraisal of the ways in which abstract goals and concrete actions are linked. The initiative's repeated and persistent use of the abstraction ladder, in contrast, has served the important end of allowing the collaborators to continue to "see themselves" in the plan as it developed, while serving also as a source of inspiration and a means of preserving individuals' satisfaction about the usefulness of the plan in the life of an organization of which all involved cared deeply – Sand Hill School.

Suspense in attending to the "specifics" of an initiative is crucial during the conception of an initiative. But retaining or consciously reimposing a certain level of abstraction and generality is a necessary part of nurturing the meaningful involvement of others. The Interactive Communication project demonstrated this as the founding team enlisted an action team from outside the comfortable circle of Shared Responsibility. It is important to stress that the founding team had planfully agreed that it was vital to the effort that the survey process remain relatively undefined. This preserved the possibility that the community members whom the founding team wished to engage in the initiative might feel that they could genuinely steer the work in meaningful ways that aligned with the motives and interests of the participating members of the school community.

ATTEND TO CONFLICT

It was important for the members of the founding team to remind themselves that conflict would be a part of working with the Interactive Communication process. Using theory related to the Shared Responsibility model, the founders reminded themselves that attending to the model components could help to keep conflicts more manageable. Conflict sometimes emerged during Interactive Communication's work. One community member that the action team engaged in writing the survey draft, for instance, expressed a strong desire to have questions concerning quality education focus strictly on academics. By contrast, some members of Interactive Communication's founding team expressed their preference for a broader definition: quality education, they maintained, could also encompass things like school climate or access to services and opportunity. In confronting this conflict, the action team spent considerable time reviewing all the perspectives presented and discussing the kinds of information that they would receive from each focus. In essence, the issue confronted in this example is that of finding how productively to "agree to disagree." Ultimately an overt return to the vision and a check for alignment helped make the conflict productive – not because it "resolved" the issues in any traditional sense, but because it enriched understandings among participants in the process. Finding the so-called middle ground that "conflict resolution" seems to connote brings with it the disadvantage of sapping the energy and dedication of the members of an initiative. The initiative's return to the vision, on the other hand, generated dialogue, and, thus, promoted attention to the perspectives of all involved. In essence, returning to the organizational vision helped initiative members reconcile the conflict in a different way by enabling their understanding of the common threads among the differing definitions of "quality" at play within the school community. In the end, the survey that emerged reflected a more multifaceted and nuanced definition of "quality education" and, above all, a definition that was more *inclusive*.

A second example of conflict highlighted the way that the Shared Responsibility Framework helped the founding team understand the growing level of investment by the action team. That level of investment led to some unexpected outcomes: As the action team's level of investment grew, the level of energy with which the group undertook its tasks had the potential to contribute to their exclusion of the founding team as observers. This may have been due to sheer efficiency interests. Or perhaps the action team was claiming a more exclusive sort of ownership for the process. Whatever the reason, by rearticulating obligations to the overall grant, the founding team was able to remind the action team in a non-threatening way of the founders' roles and responsibilities within the Interactive Communication Initiative. Consideration of the model therefore allowed the founding team members to keep their distance from the conflict for a time, and to maintain their position as process observers. And using the framework also assisted the founding team in recognizing the need to clarify and revisit with the action team the Interactive Communication vision. But, lest this example seem credible only in cases that involve commitments to "outside" interests such as granting agencies, the imperatives are essentially the same in all collaborative contexts. Each person who chooses to participate in such a project brings both talents (resources) and interests (motives) to the table. In order to preserve a project's potential, respecting and accommodating the interests of those involved is key to maximizing available talents and energy, and thus, to maintaining project momentum.

In a third example of conflict, it became evident that the action team resented the consultants' feedback about draft surveys. While the members of the action team appeared to accept and understand the reasons for the participation of the consultants, members of the action team frequently appeared to discard feedback from the consultants without discussion, and to verbally

justify their own reasons for retaining certain questioned survey wordings and formatting decisions. The founding team members met to discuss how to work with this conflict. Through their eagerness to tap the expertise of the consultants, the members of the founding team agreed that they had inadvertently communicated to the action team that the roles of those consultants were to be more "expert" (authoritarian) than "consultative" (authoritative). The founding team, action team, and consultants ultimately decided to revisit the initiative's vision during a large group meeting, by asking the action team to re-articulate their "goals" for the survey process. Here again, to a high degree this open dialogue seemed to mediate the conflict, although continual revisiting of the vision was necessary as a means of keeping project goals clear and participant roles aligned.

In sum, the lesson of these conflicts was that, while organizations may in fact be attentive to the components of the model, it is still easy to get off track. Conflict continues to be omnipresent as individuals work together. Continuing to attend to those components in the face of conflict allows for ongoing progress with work by keeping the conflict more manageable, rather than allowing the conflict to become so pervasive that the progress simply shuts down.

"STEP DOWN" FROM VISION TO ACTION, YET REVISIT THE VISION

Obviously, when building an initiative, it is helpful to leverage the work of one part of an organization by anchoring a project in existing structures and by marshaling available human resources within the organization. But how, given the vast differences in the work undertaken at various corners of a complex organization, can these things be done as people move to establish collaborative relationships? In the language of the Shared Responsibility project, grant team members have often benefited from going "down the ladder." This image, again, is representative of a mental tool that the team members employed in order to keep a more visible and palpable connection between inspiration and action, between vision and practice. Use of this tool required among those involved in the initiative three things: recognition of the necessarily abstract nature of vision as a means of striking a chord that can resonate among all involved, communication to promote ownership for the more concrete steps toward practices that grow out of that vision, and an understanding that these abstract and concrete aspects of the collaborative endeavor are ultimately different expressions or manifestations of the same plan for action.

In the case of the Interactive Communication Initiative, for instance, the people working with project leadership sought to involve an assessment expert from the district level as one of the consultants for a survey process. Involving that expert helped build his interest in constructive change efforts at Sand Hill School, and helped him link the Interactive Communication Initiative to district priorities. Involving the assessment expert also helped people within the school community to appreciate more completely the support and resources that are available through the district, and to understand how to harness the district's support effectively in pursuit of more local school level goals. But in determining the nature of that expert's involvement, even though the Interactive Communication leadership could reasonably expect an element of alignment and investment from the expert on account of his role within the district, careful communication about the needs of both the expert and the members of the initiative leadership was necessary in order to move to action. And, after careful discussions, a return to the language of the mission and to our understandings of how the initiative was aligned with that vision underscored the propriety of the initiative's goals within the larger community.

The lesson of this experience and others like it is that, though organizational vision is a necessary and helpful source of inspiration, vision alone is not sufficient as a means toward actual practice. Vision can, for instance, link people as they work in their different capacities within an

organization, privately or with one of a number of work groups. At the level of practice within an emerging collaborative relationship, however, vision normally does not provide a mechanism for articulating specific goals and tasks. There, communication and negotiations are necessary, first, in order to establish and account for the particular skills and needs of the various participants in an initiative, and, second, to enable the delineation of roles and responsibilities in terms that are clear enough to enable effective practice – and certainly that have a clarity and meaning that vision alone cannot and should not specify. To forego these processes of communication and negotiation is to risk a debilitating lack of momentum toward the accomplishment of the organization's work. This tendency arises especially as uncertainty regarding specific practices begets frustration. Yet to lose sight of the vision by fixating on the earthier levels of practice is also risky. A crucial liability that can stem from such a slippage of mission, for instance, is a loss of interest or investment among various members of the community. "Why am I doing this?," participants may begin to wonder.

Use of the abstraction ladder metaphor as a means of lending visual connection between abstract and concrete aspects of a plan has helped the initiative undertake its complex work. Because of the sense of connection that the tool enabled, those involved were able to interpret and appreciate district goals in terms of the more individual contributions of various community members connected to the initiative. This has been beneficial.

RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF PARTICIPANTS

The press of outside responsibility can bear heavily on the quality of collaborative school improvement efforts. Competing obligations can erode satisfaction and feelings of self-worth among engaged school community members, and these potential disruptions make them worthy of attention. Although it may be logical to conclude that people avoid involvement in school initiatives because competing concerns are more important, the experiences of Shared Responsibility suggest, in fact, that it is possible that the members of a school community avoid such initiatives for decidedly opposite reasons – that is, because they see the commitments that such initiatives entail as *too* important. Among other factors that can contribute to this, abstract statements of mission, through their conscious attention to value-laden language, may compound perceptions that the work of schools is too vital. These are arresting assertions that warrant some analysis and explication.

In the Interactive Communication initiative experience, a case in point regarding the founding team's flexibility in accommodating individual needs has related to the responsibilities of the team's parent member. Especially given the prevalence of calls for increased parental involvement in school leadership, it is pertinent to consider how the business of the household might tend to impinge on participation in the work "in the trenches" that such a level of involvement entails. The parent member of Interactive Communication's founding team was skillful in communicating her obligations to her own children. Again, in order to accommodate these functions as a part of their work (rather than a distraction from it), the members of the team employed the ladder as a tool with which to renegotiate the roles and responsibilities that they had tentatively undertaken. By "going down the ladder" in order to propose concrete practices that were sensitive and accommodating with respect to emerging realities, the group was able to efficiently speculate and communicate about their investment and their willingness and ability to execute the practice at hand. But this was only half of the challenge – the *easier* half. The harder part concerned "going up the ladder" during this renegotiation process, namely, by considering and valuing at more abstract levels the parent member's potentially competing obligations. To do this, the founding members were able to view emerging new tasks and duties in terms that were valuable to the collective because they were attributable to the group's work. To draw an analogy, in reference to valued relationships, people

sometimes say, "Any friend of hers is a friend of mine." In a similar vein, members of Shared Responsibility have, through use of the framework, become able to feel that "Her work is our work." In the analogy, the strength of an intimate friendship enables a person to accept and even cherish a part of the other that is essentially unfamiliar – "her friends." In collaborative school improvement efforts, where the benefit of an intimate relationship isn't often available, the abstraction ladder can serve as a tool for linking the less familiar work of single members to the progress of the collective. In short, this example suggests that, because the progress of an initiative relies on the continued investment of its members, the whole of each member's undertakings demand respect and attention. And at times those undertakings *will* demand accommodation as well.

Another illustration of the Interactive Communication Initiative's accommodation of personal needs related to the principal – one founding member whose responsibilities clearly called him out of a number of key meetings and activities at crucial times. This required good-faith efforts on the parts of both the principal and the other founding and leadership team members to press ahead. The principal himself, for instance, had to vest his trust in the group to make consequential decisions in his absence. The ladder was useful as a tool for understanding this transfer of authority as a move toward action at more concrete levels of practice. The members of the group, in turn, were able, through the use of the ladder, to "go up" in order to attribute or ascribe the principal's pressing business to the same common venture around which the business of the Interactive Communication Initiative revolved.

It is certainly nothing new to seek systematic ways to identify and preempt the kinds of noncommitment and disengagement that can hamper sustained school improvement efforts. Most notably, as mentioned, typical school mission-building processes constitute at least in part attempts to mitigate the potential for disengagement or for non-investment. Consider the very assumptions underlying the important work of organizational visioning processes. At the root, these events appear to be efforts designed to secure the commitment and dedication of educators and other members of a school community by harnessing participants' interests in moral pursuits. Toward that end, the typical mission-building event, to a high degree, serves as a forum by which the members of a community can articulate values and can build on these expressions; as a result, the mission statements that they typically produce employ inspirational language. Visioning events are, in short, efforts to energize members of an organization through inspiration. However, when interpreted as a key toward action, the language of a mission statement – precisely because of the moral imperatives that fuels inspiration and the affective connection of an organization's members – can also be daunting. As a result, the inspiration that visioning provides as a spur toward improvement is often short-lived. For some, the connection between vision and practice appears to be unproductive. The dilemma is clear. By emphasizing vision in pursuit of inspiration and a sense of community, a school risks establishing the impression that "action" is subordinate. Or, in the alternative, school leaders might employ visions inappropriately as a means of assessing actions. A one-track emphasis on action often provides little means of reinforcing a school's collective identity and sense of purpose. Further, such an emphasis often does not inspire educators toward action, nor does it respond in other ways to the moral motives that seem to attract members of a school community – all the more because people in schools have embraced work in an otherwise undercompensated profession and toward underappreciated ends.

Thus, if both abstract visioning and concrete practice are crucial, the central problem resides in the absence of a mechanism for interpreting an abstract statement of vision in more local and concrete terms. Educators lack a means of realizing a common direction in terms that are less daunting than those available when, by default, they return to their organizational visions – as if

mission statements, for instance, should function as an action plan rather than a source of inspiration. The abstraction ladder fills this void by providing a mechanism that can move its users toward the resolution of this dilemma. By applying the imagery that the ladder provides, the Interactive Communication Initiative has been able to adhere to its sense of direction and to value the participation all its members even as that participation waxes and wanes when other commitments emerge and subside.

In sum, while maintaining progress toward desired goals, it has often been a challenge to accommodate the emerging needs of key members of the Interactive Communication Initiative with respect to their multiple duties both in and outside of the context of the collaborative work that participants in the initiative have pursued. The preceding analysis has considered the growth that the Interactive Communication group has experienced as it has interpreted lessons learned from the Shared Responsibility Framework and from other grant experiences. In response to its challenges, participants in the initiative have learned to adjust roles and responsibilities in order to accommodate emerging needs. The framework has been useful in helping to maintain perspective and balance when personal needs seemed to threaten progress. It was particularly helpful to have developed agility in "moving up and down the ladder" in order to revisit and remain faithful to the vision even as adjustments in specific action plans were necessary. Use of the abstraction ladder also enabled appraisals of team efforts at the earthier level of concrete action – the only level at which the model suggests such judgments are appropriate and practicable. At the same time, the image that the ladder has provided, one of linkage between the concrete and abstract aspects of an issue, has helped us to avoid sacrificing our connection to the more abstract, ethereal, and value-laden level of vision that inspires us move to action and to persevere in our efforts.

SEEK AUTHENTICITY

The founding team has taken care to ensure the relevance or authenticity of the Interactive Communication process. This appears to have created conditions intended to nurture a sustained effort. To contribute to the initiative's authenticity, the Interactive Communication leadership has, first, considered and attended to the ways that individuals come into a process and "make it their own." While there needed to be a genuine framework – a loosely structured vision – from which to work, individuals also needed to feel their own sense of control and excitement about their work. Second, the leadership worked to create a process that truly had meaning to the community. School survey processes can often lead to two genres of ingenuine application. One is a form of "benign abuse" in which the information a process yields is used primarily for "cheerleading" purposes. In such cases, sensitive questions and issues are sidestepped in order to preempt the emergence of negative feedback. But the Interactive Communication Initiative faced situations in which pointed questions about smaller class sizes and larger facilities, for instance, were included for earnest consideration within the survey, and were not ignored as out of bounds because of the "taboo" funding implications surrounding the questions. A second form of ingenuine application that can emerge in community surveys is a sort of non-use of emerging information: any negative implications are effectively brushed aside – or placed "under the community table" so to speak – as "something to think about." In the Interactive Communication project, the founding team not only wanted to hear perspectives from the community, but the team sought to hear the broadest possible range of perspectives. The survey results have not been, nor were they ever intended to be, "candy coated." Instead, the process was conceived to allow the community to hear in greater detail not only about what seems to be working, but also about where the school community might improve. And importantly, the process was designed to translate that information into actions. In a

real sense this approach validates information about topics that community members considered important in the life of the school. It thereby encourages community members to take an active role in their school. Chapter Two of this monograph, which discussed the Service Delivery Initiative, illustrated a situation in which the task of responding to important critical feedback proved overwhelming; as a result, the information was largely set aside, and little visible change resulted from the communication. Sand Hill community members have stated that their agreement to participate in the process is attributable to their desire to see something positive result from that participation: They have wanted to see action toward improvement grow from their comments on surveys.

The Interactive Communication Initiative's founding team has heard consistently that the initiative appears to be an authentic process. Though the overall success of the initiative remains to be seen, perhaps, the potential power of the project's authenticity is best illustrated in the case of the action team. Following the formal completion of most of Interactive Communication's work, for instance, the founding team invited the action team to a meeting in order to bring some closure to the process. The action team's engagement in the survey process, after all, had been for a single school year. The action team, however, clearly seemed to feel that the learning around this process was not complete, and the members of the team expressed their intention to spend the time they felt was necessary to analyze and report the survey results more completely. Further, the action team identified the necessity of continued communication with the community: they discussed the potential for a "Survey Corner" in the monthly newsletter as a suitable and user-friendly form of written dissemination to the community, for instance, and have moved ahead with that idea.

The action team's interest in pursuing communication within the Sand Hill community seems indicative of this group's perception that they have been engaged in an authentic process – in an activity that could make some difference. The team's commitment to continuing the Interactive Communication process appears to be related to a prevailing feeling that the initiative provides a conduit within which participants can channel their energies toward genuine progress. Further, their commitment to facilitating the development of actions related to the information gathered remains strong. In short, the process in which the action team members had agreed to participate seemed to "strike a chord" when they had agreed to join the Interactive Communication cause. And, over a year later, those members still appear to believe that the project's contributions to the school are genuine and worth continuing effort.

As stated at the outset of this chapter, the three founding members, in order to enhance school communication efforts, undertook the Interactive Communication Initiative in large part with an eye on nurturing and preserving the sometimes vulnerable commitments or investments of school community members. And it is gratifying that this change effort does appear to have witnessed some success. Though still young, the initiative appears to have taken hold in the school community. This result is most evident in higher levels of investment among those who have joined in the efforts to augment lines of communication at Sand Hill, to enhance the quality of feedback among the school's stakeholders, and to take meaningful action based on the information that this discourse has produced.

To be sure, the initiative constitutes a localized and relatively small-scale application of the Shared Responsibility Framework, and acknowledgment of the limitations of the Interactive Communication experience is appropriate here. Readers should note, first, that the Service Delivery Initiative example described earlier in this monograph was a change initiative whose scale was significantly larger at its outset, and was one that experienced a longer trial by fire within the Sand Hill community. Also, many of the "tough questions" to which the community members had

responded in the wake of the older initiative have not yet been comprehensively redirected in reference to Interactive Communication. Further, it is worth noting that the Service Delivery Initiative has been the focus of prolonged and intense scrutiny; reviewing the older initiative with a critical eye is easier because of that effort's identity within the grant's circles as relatively "ancient history." In much the same way, it will become easier to judge and critique the founding and initiation of Interactive Communication as time passes.

But another limitation warrants mention – one that stands also as a more affirming invitation to potential users of the learning conveyed here. Namely, the core members of the grant have undertaken the development of the Shared Responsibility Framework with a spirit of speculation and experimentation. At various junctures, for instance, each of several of the grant members have produced their own diagrams and graphics in order to help communicate their understanding of the implications of the model to others on the team. Members of the group have met in twos, threes, and fours – often in informal contexts – in order to talk and to advance those understandings. A point of advice for potential users would be to take up the information and experiences shared here with a similar spirit of speculation and inquiry. With that advice in mind, this chapter should stand not as template for specific action, but as a detailed record of experiences within which readers might recognize their worlds.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING THE STORY: INVITING APPLICATION AND RESEARCH OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

JO MONTIE
TOM KOCH
BRIAN ABERY
PAUL FOSSUM

The Interactive Communication Initiative described in Chapter Five provides one example of how a school leadership team drew on components of the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* in order to nurture school reform. To reiterate, the goal of that initiative was not to test the theoretical constructs of the framework, but to broaden participatory decision-making practices. Importantly, however, this school-based effort demonstrates reciprocation between "leaders" and "stakeholders": Those involved with the effort influenced and were influenced by each other. This tends to confirm that meaning "occurs" as people interact within a change context (Woods, 1992). Moreover, the Interactive Communication Initiative experience was certainly not linear or episodic, but grew instead in a more complex manner. A significant objective of the Shared Responsibility Model is to provide constructions that individuals, groups, and communities can use in order to attend to this "dynamic complexity" (Garmston & Wellman, 1997).

This chapter begins by describing some of the strengths and caveats of the Shared Responsibility Framework in supporting school reform. A brief discussion of the framework in relationship to research and practice regarding sustained school improvement then follows. We emphasize the building of bridges between research and practice, between "high hard ground" and "swamp," between quantitative and qualitative (Wagner, 1994). In a sense, Chapter Six serves a dual-function of synthesizing some of the ideas from the previous chapters, and setting the stage for the final chapter (Chapter Seven) that emphasizes contextually-responsive application of the model. Chapter Seven offers readers a discovery process – a series of questions and strategies intended to prompt individual or group inquiry and experimentation with the framework.

FRAMEWORK SUMMARY

Chapter Four described some key components of the Shared Responsibility Framework (specifically, vision, the abstraction ladder, proposed practice, personal and organizational learning, roles and responsibilities, communication) especially in terms of the ways these components interact. Chapter Four further provided some interchange that may occur among people as they attend to the elements that the model offers. The following section summarizes the framework's strengths and caveats. In a sense, the strengths correspond to some of the grant participants' hopes and intentions as they developed the model. But, the Shared Responsibility Framework – like any model, or simplified illustration of complex elements and interactions – has its limits. Overt

attention here to some of the limits that have become apparent to the grant team may help people who apply the framework in their own context. The strengths and caveats that the following narrative provides are summarized in Table 6.1.

STRENGTHS OF THE MODEL: WHAT IT IS

The model, first, emphasizes attention to people's *investment and involvement over time*. The framework is a tool to help leaders (not administrators or the "formal" leadership alone) to sustain stakeholders' meaningful involvement in school improvement efforts and their movement toward a common vision. A variety of responses and actions may grow from attending to the components and interaction clusters that are the model's areas of focus. For example, using model components may support the analysis of a recent conflictual meeting. The reflective analysis that the model promotes can lead to insights that can help people make such a conflict more manageable, and can thereby nourish relationships and collective goals. Or, to take a different example, the model components enable better planning for a parent-school partnership retreat by helping an organizing group to focus their efforts together. Through their attention to aspects of the framework, for instance, such a planning team may be more effective in anticipating and preparing for the range of learning styles and perspectives represented at a planning retreat; this, of course could serve the vital end of supporting all participants' initial engagement with and continuing commitment to the project. The framework is used to look back (reflective analysis) or inform future actions (proactive planning) with the objective of enhancing the collective investment of and relevance for stakeholders.

Second, the model is *dynamic, contextual, and nonlinear*. The framework is intended to be a contextually-responsive tool that emphasizes complex interactions among several factors pertaining to change. A preponderance of school change approaches such as "strategic planning" and typical staff development efforts are implemented in a linear, prescriptive manner, and/or perceived as "events" to "do" (Fullan & Miles, 1992; Szabo, 1996). The Shared Responsibility Framework, by contrast, seeks to attend to – and perhaps even to embrace – the "swampy" daily dilemmas

TABLE 6.1 STRENGTHS AND CAVEATS OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

- EMPHASIZES ATTENTION TO PEOPLE'S INVESTMENT IN A CHANGE PROCESS
- RESPONDS TO THE DYNAMIC, CONTEXTUAL NATURE OF CHANGE
- SEEKS TO PROMPT INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE REFLECTION
- REPRESENTS A BROAD VIEW OF LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY
- REFLECTS AND EMPLOYS THE BELIEF THAT EVERYONE HAS THE CAPACITY FOR CONTINUAL LEARNING
- REPRESENTS A CERTAIN VIEW OF AN EXPERIENCE, NOT "*THE* REALITY."
- DOES NOT CLAIM TO BE EMPIRICALLY TESTED
- INTENDS TO SUPPORT – NOT SUPPLANT – OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS AND PERSONAL ACTION THEORIES OF CHANGE
- CONTINUES TO EVOLVE AND DEVELOP AS A CHANGE THEORY
- DOES NOT DIRECTLY ADDRESS LEADERSHIP STYLE
- IS COMPLEX TO UNDERSTAND AND USE

and ambiguities that characterize schools. Although, during the development of the Shared Responsibility Framework, the grant team has cast a critical eye toward other models of change because those approaches so often underestimate the importance of ongoing interaction, it is important to stress that the framework is not intended to replace other approaches. Rather, the framework should be used *in concert* with other models. This kind of integrated approach to organizational change can guide collective attention toward areas that affect interpretation and investment.

Third, the model prompts individual and organizational *reflection*. Much of Shared Responsibility grant team's four years of learning was not immediately obvious; instead, it required conscious, prolonged, and reiterated examination and reflection in search of meaning and significance. The team's experiences therefore confirmed Garmston and Wellman's (1997) observation that adults do not necessarily learn from experiences, but rather in their reflection *upon* experience. The Shared Responsibility Framework can support such examination of one's own perspectives about a specific change, and examination of others' perspectives as well. The goal of observing certain features of social interaction within the context of change, then, is to prompt and guide individual reflection or group dialogue in order to pursue insight into evolving contextual content.

To enable examination and reflection, the model highlights areas that require exceptional vigilance because of their prominence in challenging social conditions; the framework components comprise relatively specific aspects that contribute to stakeholders' experiences, habits, actions, beliefs, and, ultimately, to their investment in school improvement processes. Deeper understanding of one's personal action theories can lead to strengthened or improved actions and practices, and, by extension, organizational outcomes (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). The discovery process (described in the next chapter) presents ideas on using the framework to prompt reflection that hones in on the degree to which people are engaged with a change process overtime.

Fourth, the model is grounded in the belief that *everyone has the capacity to contribute leadership*. The model is also rooted in a broad conception of leadership (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995): everyone has the capacity to lead, and a social system needs leadership from all corners, not simply from traditional formal leadership positions (for instance, principals, district-level staff, or staff development coordinators). And, leadership is a dynamic, not static, entity. An individual's decision to lead, and to lead in a particular way, is related to multiple factors that include, among other things, timing, the issues, and a person's formal and informal roles. The Shared Responsibility Model stems from the recognition that sustaining change is dependent upon significant leadership energy (Fullan, 1998a), and the model should therefore be relevant for anyone who seeks to provide direction within a system.

And fifth, the model is fixed in the conviction that *everyone has the capacity to learn*. Paired with the broad conception of leadership just described is the notion that everyone needs to learn and change, including leaders themselves! The model, which embraces that kindred assumption as well, is therefore intended to help leaders resist habits of listening to stakeholders with a predetermined end, and to instead support leaders in self-examination aimed at personal change. Covey (1989) has suggested that seeking to understand and to learn from another person requires an openness to being influenced and potentially changing one's own perspective. The goal of enabling this reciprocal spirit is therefore among the pivotal aims of the model. A key intent, in short, is to enable choices and changes with an eye on true collective organizational vision rather than on the "steering" of community members and on the extinction of perceived "resistance" to change (Janas, 1998).

CAUTIONS REGARDING THE MODEL: WHAT IT IS NOT

Among a few caveats that warrant attention here is that the Shared Responsibility Model is *not "the reality"*; any model should help people to see things in a new way, but, paradoxically, models will, by their nature, obscure other things (Henning-Stout, 1994). People see the world through their own different lens, a world not as it is but as they are (Covey, 1989). Senge (1990) has added the caution that what people see frequently determines their reality. It is therefore important to seek out multiple perspectives on issues, problems, and experiences within any system. Because the Shared Responsibility Framework emphasizes perspective-taking and seeking other views of reality, it is important to stress that reliance only on this model would leave its users just as vulnerable to becoming trapped and unnecessarily constrained. The model is neither comprehensive nor exclusive of other models, and it does not address all aspects of change or organizational reform. The model is no panacea (Fullan, 1998a). It does not seek to refute or devalue the many other perspectives and change approaches that exist. It offers one new view of social elements that are often overlooked or oversimplified. In fact, responsible and effective use of the model necessitates a spirit of eclecticism as the framework's tenets are applied in conjunction with those of other perspectives (see Evans, 1996; Fullan, 1998b; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998; Havelock, 1995; Newmann & Wehlag, 1995; Senge, 1990).

Second, the Shared Responsibility Model is *not empirically tested*. The model grew from an inductive, inquiry process (Kosmidou & Usher, 1991) and not from a deductive, experimental design. In other words, as is common and appropriate of theory-building efforts, the theory that the model pursues and that it seeks to depict in a simplified way has emerged from reflection and analysis of experiences "in the swamp" (Schön, 1987) of actual school change efforts; the work reflects its context-laden origins (Quantz, 1992). Thus, a limitation is that the theory has not yet been rigorously tested; a priori hypotheses about school change were not among the features of the effort that led to the model. Naturally, further investigation of the model is warranted, and the next section of this chapter discusses this briefly.

Third, the model is an evolving theory. The grant team, with this monograph, has taken a risk by "going public" with the release of these ideas about the framework at this time. The partial accounting of the Shared Responsibility Model provided here owes to the relative infancy of the theory's development. Though, too, this monograph reflects considerable conscious effort to avoid appearing rigid or carved-in-stone, some of the gaps in this description owe to the fact that there is much yet to discern about the components described here and about their interactions.

A fourth potential limitation of the Shared Responsibility Model is that it *does not address leadership style*. Leadership characteristics and their effects on school reform have received considerable scrutiny (Blase & Kirby, 1992; Evans, 1995; Heifitz, 1994). Although it is true that the characteristics of those in public roles of leadership contribute to the experience of educational reform, these characteristics yield unique meaning only in interaction with other stakeholders. The view presented in this monograph therefore stems from the assertion that, in the messy world of change, it is beneficial to consider how social interplay influences an initiative's significance and then to remember that effective leadership requires an understanding of those context-specific interactions.

And fifth, the Shared Responsibility Model is *not quickly understood* and it is thereby *challenging to use*. Although the contextual and non-prescriptive qualities of the model are a strength in one sense, the model is harder to understand and use precisely because of its sensitivity to those "moving targets." Attempts to instruct others about the model – its rather perplexing conceptions

in dynamic applications – have resulted in some humbling experiences for the members of the grant team. The model, for example, indicates that it is important, within a given change effort, for people to consider numerous components concurrently. Moreover, the framework emphasizes attending to the interactions and relationships among these several parts, not simply viewing the components as separate and static entities. To muddy things further, the very event or experience to which one might apply the framework will, of course, continue to change; some change may be due to the passage of time, while other change might be attributable to the very attention an experience receives. In short, the model is complex. But so is the nature of people in interaction. Thus, while the long-term goal of the model involves learning to notice and pay attention to all of the framework components within experiences and interactions, the experience of the Shared Responsibility team suggests that individuals will likely find certain aspects of the framework more relevant than other elements, and that this relative relevance may also shift over time.

STUDY AND APPLICATION OF THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

The previous discussion has summarized some of the key possibilities and cautions of a theory on sustained investment in school improvement. Yes, the Shared Responsibility Framework is a *theory* – and "theories are valuable only to the extent that they are useful" (Wiersma, 1995, p. 20). Certainly this monograph demonstrates how the framework has been useful, and therefore valuable, to the grant team. The remainder of the monograph seeks to build bridges between the framework and the reader's context. How might the framework be useful to others? What are some ways to think about research and study of the framework in relationship to efforts to create sustained school improvement? How can the model help leaders to understand the "reality" of their own school community? This chapter begins to answer these questions with a brief discussion of the framework within the context of research and study. Chapter Seven will continue with that effort to bring the model to life in the world of the reader with a presentation of a discovery process that should help readers to apply and explore some of framework concepts.

A BROAD PERSPECTIVE ON RESEARCH AND STUDY

When it comes to research paradigms, it is easy to talk of "camps" and even to take sides (Fujiura, 1994; Patton, 1986; Van Mannen, 1988). It can become a habit to speak of those in the qualitative, phenomenological, meaning-making camp and others in the quantitative, analytical-empirical camp. Yet, there is growing agreement that there is a need for multiple perspectives and forms of knowledge when looking at complex, social phenomena (Fujiura, 1994; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Saban, Killion, & Green, 1994) such as school improvement. Fujiura (1994) has noted how such dichotomy "fails to reflect the diversity of nuances represented in both perspectives" (p. 35). Although limited by distortions and incomplete images when used in isolation from other traditions, various traditions of inquiry, when considered complementary, can contribute to a more comprehensive view of an experience or phenomena under study (Fujiura, 1994). Although the framework grew from an inductive and interpretive approach and additional efforts at Sand Hill School included the use of qualitative methodologies, the grant team in general embraces the broader view of knowledge and research that Fujiura and others have expressed.

There are numerous possible directions and emphases of research and study of systemic school change (Curtis & Stollar, 1995; Grimes & Tilly, 1996; Hall & Hord, 1987; Loucks-Horsley & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Sarason, 1990; Wheatley, 1992). Although a comprehensive discussion of the possibilities for research using the framework is beyond the scope and intent of this monograph,

two possible directions for study and application of the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* warrant attention here. First, the model may itself serve as a starting point to generate further research questions and hypotheses about sustained school improvement, whether at a broad or a more context-specific level. Second, the model can support leaders (again, broadly defined) and other stakeholders in action research efforts. And, to stress, generation of research questions and supporting action research are certainly not mutually exclusive areas.

At a general level, there is a need to better understand the complexity of school reform and the interplay among various factors. The framework broaches a number of questions that bear on sustained school improvement. What, for instance, are the origins and functions of factional behavior in school reform? How does the ability to influence an initiative affect stakeholder participation? What are the different faces and roles of conflict in school reform? How is vision translated into concrete, meaningful practices? How does systematic attention to learning and accommodations for heterogeneity of skills affect initiative implementation? There is a need for rigorous examination and study – whether through qualitative or quantitative approaches – of the various components of the model as prisms for the analysis of people and of their social systems. Specific methodology could "grow" from the research questions and goals, the researcher's orientation, and the context; ultimately, as mentioned, there would be value in testing the theory in order to prove whether attending to the model's components do indeed help sustain collective investment.

Although large scale studies, and the generalizable findings they can produce, have value in the overall picture of educational reform, such study can lack immediate relevance and therefore genuine involvement of many professionals, family members, and students (Boudah & Mitchell, 1998; Guskey, 1986). Thus, there is also an immediate need for educational reform actions that fully engage professionals and community members in the pursuit of improvement. In addition, people's involvement in educational reform efforts are frequently described and evaluated in terms of supporters and resistors, insiders and outsiders, or we/they (Gitlin & Margonis, 1995; Janas & Boudreaux, 1997). This categorization is frequently unconscious, another habit of sorts, one might say. The Shared Responsibility Framework is intended to inquire into the social dynamics of change, but in a manner that avoids factionalizing or marginalizing people.

The framework is also intended to generate not only general and theory-testing hypotheses, but also hypotheses that are contextually-based. Thus, in line with "large scale" studies of educational reform, "action research" efforts within real and dynamic social settings are important (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Gelzheiser & Meyers, 1996; Schmuck, 1997). And it is within this context-specific milieu that use of the framework appears most fruitful. The components of the model appear well-suited to the aim of promoting understanding of the many views of "reality" that exist within social settings such as schools.

APPLICATION THROUGH COLLECTIVE REFLECTION AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

Colleagues, critical friends, and learning partners play an important role in personal and professional learning. Research and practitioner experiences point out a variety of benefits in reflecting with others (Diss, Buckley, & Pfau, 1992; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Levin, 1995; Montie, York-Barr, & Kronberg, 1998; Szabo, 1996; Wells et. al, 1994). The concern here is to reflect upon one's leadership within the broader, social context that includes interaction, influence, and learning with other people. Honest and worthwhile reflection of practice calls for explicitly seeking other people's perspectives. Others' observations can also aid in discovering one's own beliefs and habits. Clearly,

it is appropriate to engage both in individual reflection and conversation with others. Reflection can occur through a variety of strategies and formats, including "journaling, case analysis, cognitive coaching, study groups, reading with inquiry, and small and large group dialogue" (Montie et al., 1998, p. 2). Although describing specific reflective practices strategies and processes is beyond the scope of this monograph, other sources that do so include Lee and Barnett, 1994; Montie et al., 1998; Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993; and Senge, et al. 1994. The discovery process in Chapter Seven supports individual or group reflection efforts to pay attention to leadership and stakeholder investment for a particular initiative.

CLOSING: A METAPHOR TO APPLY THE FRAMEWORK

This monograph represents the end of one journey and the potential beginning of many more. The Shared Responsibility grant team's journey began over five years ago. While the members of that team envisioned concluding work with a monograph of this type, the vision was of a very different content. The grant's initial efforts were to identify the characteristics of a grand initiative which others could then emulate. Ironically, though, through a four-year process of reflection the understanding that emerged most clearly was that "grand initiatives" require attention to "petite initiatives" – to the small interactions that occur multiply throughout a day. Yet, that attention in itself isn't sufficient either; with added irony, understanding the "petite" daily interactions, and thus how to influence *and be influenced by them*, requires, in turn, attention to grand characteristics, such as community habits and the components of the Shared Responsibility Framework. The challenge to understand the nature of this reciprocal influence lies ahead.

The preceding chapters represent some of the grant team's experiences with the framework ideas in the hope that readers can create their own meaning by using the framework within their own school communities – through the observation of experiences, through inquiry about their beliefs, and through testing out hunches. To provide the reader with an entree into that work, the discovery process in Chapter Seven uses a visual journey metaphor; more precisely, the journey involves getting off of the interstate and venturing onto country roads. In keeping with the model itself, while such a route results in slower travel, it also offers opportunities for unexpected discoveries and experiencing the "local flavor" of communities. Over the past four years, our richest learning as a grant team has involved action and reflection that has occurred in context. We hope that you too will find that to be true as you travel on these country roads and see what you discover about your own leadership beliefs and practices, your context, investment in school initiatives (your own and other stakeholders), and the concepts within the framework. Like scenic overlooks and historical markers that are often visited on a road trip, the pause points (in the discovery process) offer opportunities to examine certain aspects of providing leadership for an initiative. We wish you an adventuresome journey of exploration, reflection, and informed action on the roads and highways of your own schools!

CHAPTER 7

DISCOVERY PROCESS: CREATING YOUR JOURNEY IN APPLYING THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

JO MONTIE
PAM TAYLOR
TOM KOCH

This monograph reflects some of the grant team's most significant understandings that were generated and discovered over the course of four years. As referenced in Chapter One, we went into our grant experience at Sand Hill School expecting to learn more about how inclusive practices become embedded within a school community improvement process. We leave the experience with our deepest understandings centered around such things as how one's investment and perspective influence how one thinks, listens, and acts – thus having direct implications for leadership. Goens (1998) described leadership as "helping people to perceive and think about their work in new and diverse ways" (p. 42). We believe that the *Shared Responsibility Framework of Social Interaction for Collective Investment* can help leaders to notice and examine their work in new and diverse ways in order to expand effectiveness in supporting change.

RATIONALE AND OVERVIEW OF THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

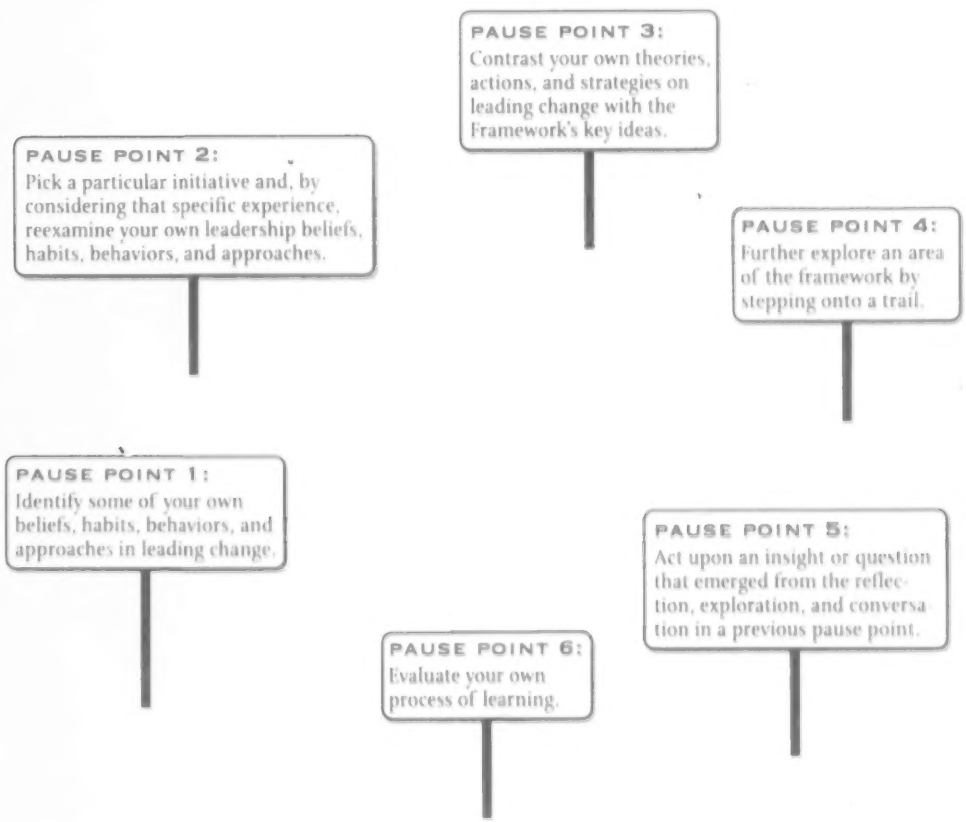
A theme throughout the monograph has been one of acknowledging the complexity, ambiguity, and struggle that exists within schools and communities. These "swamp" (Schön, 1987; see Chapter Three) elements of our experiences become heightened or magnified when seeking collective action for school improvement. For instance, administrators are challenged by the complexity in fostering the development of common community expectations among staff, families, and students. Or, as another example, teachers are faced by the complexity of strengthening home-school communication that will be culturally responsive, student-focused, and manageable. Further still, parents may experience confusion in navigating ways to genuinely contribute within the school community and in classrooms.

In the face of such challenges, what keeps leaders and change agents from becoming stuck or paralyzed? Certainly there are numerous factors that assist leaders and change agents to remain proactive and effective. In this chapter, we emphasize learning to view experiences through multiple lenses or "frames," thereby enhancing leadership's capacities to see their challenges and experiences from various angles (Bolman & Deal, 1994). A collection of frames can offer a more comprehensive view of an experience and supports reframing – a much needed capacity when dealing with the ambiguous, contextual nature of leadership and school change (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). Reframing, according to Bolman and Deal (1994), refers to a "conscious effort to size up a situation from multiple perspectives" (p. 5). Put simply, the Shared Responsibility Framework is another way to reframe school change initiatives.

To assist with this reframing endeavor, this chapter features "The Discovery Process: A Self-guided Journey in Applying the Shared Responsibility Framework." This process supports readers in individual reflection and group conversation with an eye on strengthening their ability to foster school change. Some readers may already know how they want to apply the framework, while others may desire additional assistance in translating the theory into practice. This chapter is intended for the latter group. Our experiences suggest that people learn best about the framework through discovery and experimentation with the ideas in relationship to their own experiences. Due to its nonlinear nature, the framework essentially has no beginning or endpoint; consequently, applying the model can begin with attention to any combination of components. What immediately follows is a brief overview of the discovery process, while the remainder of the chapter describes the process in its entirety.

The discovery process here includes a cycle of six parts, labeled "pause points" (see Figure 7.1). Reflection questions are embedded within each of these nonlinear parts. An explanation of each pause point follows.

FIGURE 7.1 THE SIX PAUSE POINTS IN THE DISCOVERY PROCESS


PAUSE POINT 3:
Contrast your own theories, actions, and strategies on leading change with the Framework's key ideas.
PAUSE POINT 2:
Pick a particular initiative and, by considering that specific experience, reexamine your own leadership beliefs, habits, behaviors, and approaches.
PAUSE POINT 4:
Further explore an area of the framework by stepping onto a trail.
PAUSE POINT 1:
Identify some of your own beliefs, habits, behaviors, and approaches in leading change.
PAUSE POINT 5:
Act upon an insight or question that emerged from the reflection, exploration, and conversation in a previous pause point.
PAUSE POINT 6:
Evaluate your own process of learning.

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Recall the discussion in Chapter One about personal actions theories (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). In *Pause Point 1*, the readers begin to scratch the surface of their theories and approaches to leading change. This first part supports readers in identifying some of their espoused, more conscious beliefs, habits, and leadership strategies. *Pause Point 2* guides the readers down the abstraction ladder to a more specific initiative in hopes of making the reflection experience more concrete, personalized, and meaningful. And the questions intend to help the reader to identify, or at least to begin to uncover, some of the less conscious habits ("theories in use") that may positively or negatively influence one's involvement in supporting change. Next, with *Pause Point 3*, readers contrast their own theories and approaches regarding change with the Shared Responsibility Framework in order to identify ways that their present theory and approaches to change are helpful, and areas of the framework that may help to expand or strengthen how they currently approach change. The reflection questions in *Pause Point 4* are grouped into five areas, symbolically referred to as "trails" that involve a path of exploration and interaction among the reader, his or her context, and the framework. Each reader's view and journey on a path will be unique because of the individual experience and context that each brings into the discovery process. The trails intentionally overlap, and the reader may skip ahead, add, or change the questions found on any trail. *Pause Point 5* is an "action" step. Certainly examination, understanding, and reflection (Pause Points 1-4) *are* forms of action (and may be all the action desired in certain situations). At other times, however, additional actions and strategies might be identified. This part seeks to help people bridge their theory and reflections into practice. In *Pause Point 6*, the readers examine what was learned or attempted or changed in the process of cycling through the pause points and questions. The reader takes an intentional pause. Potentially, these reflections then cycle back into more informed actions.

A few additional tips follow, before presenting the discovery process in full. The process is written in the first-person, with "you" (etc.) referring to the person reading the questions. Also, the words "initiative" and "practice" are used interchangeably, as are the descriptors "people," "others," and "stakeholders." The questions within each pause point are simply inquiry starters, and readers are invited to fill in the blanks, so to speak, with the language and questions that best fit their contexts. And, the process is presented in the image of a journey along a country road that involves plenty of opportunities to pause and examine the scenery. And, the use of this metaphor is an example of a strategy intended to inspire or support meaning-making. The reader is encouraged to change the metaphor or other elements of this process if such changes will lead to engaging in a more genuine reflection experience.

Our aim is for the discovery process to help readers find ways to build more meaning for initiatives, thereby identifying ways to enhance stakeholders' level of investment and sense of relevance for their work. These, along with enhancing mutual understanding, better supporting people in their learning needs, and, in general, becoming more explicit about communication are goals of the Shared Responsibility Framework. We believe that all of these things will ultimately contribute to more effective support of children's learning and social development.

THE DISCOVERY PROCESS: A SELF-GUIDED JOURNEY IN APPLYING THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FRAMEWORK

PAUSE POINT 1: IDENTIFY SOME OF YOUR OWN BELIEFS, HABITS, BEHAVIORS, AND APPROACHES IN LEADING CHANGE.

- Imagine that while waiting in line for coffee at a school reform conference, a colleague asked you to sum up your philosophy and approach to facilitating school change. How might you respond?
- Briefly "paint a picture" of your organizational context. From your perspective, describe the overall strengths, challenges, and unique features of the school; the main initiatives within the school; the formal and informal school reform leadership within the organization (groups and individuals); ways to characterize the students, families, staff, and surrounding community; and the relationships and organizational climate.
- Now, more specifically examine your own role in the organization by "fleshing out" your own theories and actions used to support school improvement. What are some of your espoused beliefs and guiding principles about organizational change (i.e., what you say you believe about helping to make change happen in your organization)? And what else do you think or do? Are there certain experiences, images, steps, terms, literature, quotes, or mantras that guide your approach to leading change?

PAUSE POINT 2: PICK A PARTICULAR INITIATIVE AND, BY CONSIDERING THAT SPECIFIC EXPERIENCE, REEXAMINE YOUR OWN LEADERSHIP BELIEFS, HABITS, BEHAVIORS, AND APPROACHES.

- Describe a current or past initiative with which you have been involved. (For the remainder of the discovery process, consider this initiative as you respond to questions.) What is the initiative called? Why and how did the initiative begin? What are the goals of the initiative...according to whom? How is it currently being implemented...according to whom?
- What are the priorities of this initiative? How were priorities identified? What's your "read" on the degree of stakeholder investment in the initiative's emphases? Which stakeholders respond most to which emphases, why are they most invested, and how do you know this?
- How do you support change with this initiative? What specific actions or approaches do you use to attend to the initiative priorities? In what ways are you (or might you) pay attention to people's ownership and investment in the change process?
- Are you aware of any incongruities between how you are leading and how you would like to lead? Discrepancies between the initiative emphasis and what you believe should be emphasized?
- As a way to uncover some of your theories-in-use (the unconscious habits that may influence how you lead), look for other ways to see yourself. For example, is there a way to seek out and hear some honest, open feedback about your leadership? How might you keep the feedback manageable and useful as opposed to discouraging or overwhelming? Is there a way to more fully see the ways that your beliefs and actions line up, and are there ways to examine some of the discrepancies between your vision and daily behavior?

PAUSE POINT 3: CONTRAST YOUR OWN THEORIES, ACTIONS, AND STRATEGIES ON LEADING CHANGE WITH THE FRAMEWORK'S KEY IDEAS.

- Recall here that the Shared Responsibility Framework highlights critical areas to pay attention to in the process of initiating and supporting change within school. By directing attention toward certain components of the change process, the model is intended to help heterogeneous groups stay committed and engaged in a change process over time. See Chapter Four for visual reminders.
- Draw a picture or make a list (that is, somehow capture on paper) some of the key ideas, steps, or strategies you use when facilitating change. Now, contrast your own model or guiding principles with the framework as a way to identify what you currently like about your model and approaches, and how you might explore strengthening what you do and pay attention to in school improvement work.
- What are areas of overlap between your own model for promoting a change and the framework? What are some differences between what you pay attention to and what the framework pays attention to? What might these similarities and differences mean?
- Do any aspects of the framework seem particularly compelling or useful to you in supporting your school improvement efforts? Are there certain questions raised or aspects to change that you wish to understand better? (If yes, take time to formulate some of your questions. Then move on to Pause Point 4.)

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PAUSE POINT 4: FURTHER EXPLORE AN AREA OF THE FRAMEWORK BY STEPPING ONTO A TRAIL.

- This pause point.offers five trails to choose from: Proposed Practice Trail, Abstraction Ladder Trail, Organizational and Personal Learning Trail, Roles and Responsibilities Trail, and Communication Trail. Each trail leads to a different series of reflection questions that are intended to serve as a catalyst for exploration and interaction among the reader, his or her context, and the framework. The beginning of each trail offers clues about what types of concerns or issues might prompt choosing a particular trail ("You may want to begin this trail if..."). Then, there are several reflection questions listed for each trail. Each question is followed by a brief explanation of the question, since sharing our intentions about the questions may assist readers in revising or adding questions to suit their own contexts better.

PROPOSED PRACTICE TRAIL

Begin this trail in order to initiate or revise a practice to reflect an appropriate and inviting balance between "external" data and local context.

Clues that you may want to take this trail. Do any of these apply?:

- You want people to feel ownership – not alienation – of a new initiative from the "get go."
- You are concerned that a grassroots, internally-driven curriculum pilot will become externally-driven as the district attempts to support more systemic use of the innovation.
- A state-wide mandated initiative also allows substantial room for local interpretation and you hope that stakeholders will take ownership.

Questions:

- Why are you (and the organization) engaged in this practice?

  The goal is to encourage reflection and conversation about people's hopes and perspectives about the initiative in order to build upon these perspectives. This question also seeks to make people's expectations and assumptions more explicit instead of matters for guessing and assumption.

PROPOSED PRACTICE TRAIL (CONT.)

- What is the current relationship between the degree of local knowledge and external information (such as research and best practices) within this initiative? Does this relationship suggest the right balance?

  The goal is to reflect upon the relationship between local knowledge and external influences, and to help identify an appropriate balance between the two. Both aspects are important: emphasis on local strengths, capacities, and values allows the uniqueness of local context to remain present in an initiative; new information or external influences such as best practice can be used to promote local strengths and contribute to the talents, values, and ideas of the local community.

- Assuming that some stakeholders might find more meaning or feel more ownership to the initiative if certain things change, what are the parameters around changing the practice?

  The intention is to help leaders clarify which aspects of a vision, practice, or other parts of an innovation are open for change (that is, are negotiable) and which aspects are "carved in stone." When inviting stakeholders to engage and improve a practice, leadership needs to be genuine and explicit about the scope and parameters for the changes. Be sure to check and see whether people understood your message as you intended to be heard.

- In what ways do stakeholders already find value and meaning in the initiative, and how might the initiative be enhanced?

  The goal is to encourage conversation and understanding about the degree and manner in which stakeholders feel the initiative matters to them personally, and to identify any lack of personal meaning or dissatisfaction that may be present. Understanding the personal meaning and dissatisfaction may offer clues to revising the practice so that more ownership is experienced by more people. Expressing honest perspectives requires a safe, nonjudgmental environment. And, it is important to listen to what is said and to "hear" what is not said. Exploring silence can be just as important as exploring direct challenges or expressed dissatisfaction.

- Are there other questions to ask of yourself...of the community? Other perspectives to explore?

Either begin another trail or move on to Pause Point 5.

ABSTRACTION LADDER TRAIL

Begin this trail as a way to build meaning, connections, and inspiration among vision and more specific practices.

Clues that you may want to take this trail. Do any of these apply?:

- You want to learn about the range of motives that inspire people to get involved and stay involved.
- People within the system are having difficulty seeing a valuable connection between other people's work on other initiatives and their own work.
- You want to help the organization strengthen the connections between the vision and practices people are engaged in.

Questions:

- What does the present espoused organizational vision (that is, the stated one) mean to you and stakeholders...really?

  Espoused vision might refer to words, phrases, or images that communicate publicly about the school (often, words on a brochure, communication to parents at open house, etc.). The intent of this question is to provide for better understanding of ways in which community members presently perceive that their daily work and the school's daily life are linked to this espoused vision.

- What changes do you hope can be realized through your own particular efforts with this initiative?

  The goal is to encourage stakeholders to identify linkages between a more concrete practice and the broader organizational vision, since people do not necessarily see these connections. Linkages and felt-meaning (or lack thereof) may be indicative of what motivates members of the community to authentically engage in a practice.

- How might I better listen to and understand what other stakeholders find meaningful, encouraging, or discouraging about the initiative?

  There is a need to both better understand one's own and other people's commitment and meaning. This question seeks to create more awareness of a listener's vulnerability in being open to understanding others, especially when there is a high personal investment in an initiative.

ABSTRACTION LADDER TRAIL (CONT.)

- Is there a way to create some ongoing community conversation about what brings meaning and inspiration to one's work so that stakeholders might better appreciate the range of perspectives that exist ?

  The intention of this question is to promote continuous dialogue about the different perspectives that naturally exist regarding what brings meaning to individuals as they engage in various practices. The emphasis is upon listening and understanding, not on coercing or convincing others to "buy" your own idea. Dialogue about meaning will also give voice to some of the dilemmas and paradoxes that occur within an initiative, since none of us think exactly the same. For example, some people find "big-picture" images encouraging, whereas others get more encouraged by talking about strategies used and connections made today. Appreciating these differences may allow actions to emerge that create more meaning from more perspectives.

- Are there other questions to ask of yourself...and of the community? Other perspectives to explore?

Either begin another trail or move on to Pause Point 5.

PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING TRAIL

Start here as a way to address personal and organizational learning needs through the development of skills and capacities that address frustration and encourage investment.

Clues that you may want to take this trail. Do any of these apply?:

- You want to accommodate a wider range of adult learner needs instead of staying within your own comfort level as a facilitator.
- You are concerned about using too much of a "one size fits all" instead of an eclectic staff development approach.

PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING TRAIL (CONT.)

Questions:

- What are some of the skills and capacities present and that are needed in order to implement the initiative?

  The goal is to identify what capacities and skills are already present within the organization, and what learning and support needs to occur in order for people to contribute to the planned practice – in other words, to understand the degree of fit between the demands of the practice and the abilities of the implementers of the practice to meet those demands.

- What are the various strategies and approaches presently being used to address learning needs and building on capacities, and are there ways to strengthen or expand upon how diverse learning stages and styles are accommodated?

  This question seeks to identify the present professional development strategies and learning support used to help people to implement the initiative. Understanding the type and range of strategies is a step toward clarifying which adult learning needs are currently being met, and which need further development. Attending to a broader range of learning styles, needs, and capacities within a group will mean that more people will feel more competent in implementing the initiative. And this will generate further capacity and momentum.

- Are there areas in which people feel low confidence or frustrated or unsuccessful in proceeding with the practice? And how might these feelings be understood and responded to?

  There is an optimal learning level for people; some tension and challenge is helpful stimulate learning, but too much challenge feels unmanageable. Understanding frustration may lead to the identification of skills or resources to develop further, or to ideas of how to adjust the practice so that it reflects an attainable use of existing capacities.

- Are there other questions to ask of yourself...and of the community? Other perspectives to explore?

Either begin another trail or move on to Pause Point 5.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES TRAIL

Begin this trail as a way to identify what action needs to occur and who specifically agrees to take responsibility for the actions.

Clues that you may want to take this trail. Do any of these apply?:

- Your team is great at generating ideas and actions, yet follow through is a struggle.
- You thought people were "on board" and yet when it's time to take action, the commitment isn't shown in the action.
- Conflict and disagreements come out from "under the table" when you generate lists of tasks, responsibilities, and timelines.

Questions:

- What are the specific requirements or actions needed in order to feel like progress is being made on the initiative?

  This question should help to identify what actually "engaging in the practice" means to people. Sometimes the meaning and reasons for engaging in a practice become lost and needs to be revisited as decisions are made.

- What are the decisions about who, how, and when actions occur...and is there a time frame to recheck these decisions?

  This question seeks to explicitly check how individual members of a group interpret decisions and agreements made. People saying nothing (which can be interpreted as agreement) or only hearing one person's interpretation of something can lead to erosion of commitment to an initiative. Some people might silently disagree and act, they feel, in accordance with their silence by withdrawing; others may interpret silence as agreement and endorsement, and will naturally be surprised by withdrawal. As a strategy, identify group process(es) for making decisions and, for a while, make frequent overt checks on agreements.

- If conflict and disagreement becomes visible or expressed, can you figure out what seems to be the nature of the disagreement?

  This question seeks to explore the disagreement or conflict that centers around decisions about roles and responsibilities. Conflict can grow out of a number of decisions related to "who will do what, when." For example, people can hold different expectations of one another's roles, different perspectives on needed actions, and different opinions about "how" a job is done.

- Are there other questions to ask of yourself...and of the community? Other perspectives to explore?

Either begin another trail or move on to Pause Point 5.

COMMUNICATION TRAIL

Start on this trail as way to better understand and attend to what people are communicating about and how the communication occurs.

Clues that you may want to take this trail. Do any of these apply?:

- You want to ensure that you are talking about significant matters and not caught in a cycle of talking *around* the issues.
- Communication feels one-way instead of interactive.
- Decisions don't feel clear or closed.
- Communication doesn't seem to be happening.
- Communication is repetitive and redundant without any progress.

Questions:

- How might some of your investments (i.e., strong values, commitments, opinions about how something should occur) influence your ability to listen and be open to other perspectives?

  The goal here is to understand how your own investments may influence your ability to hear others. Revisit your own vision and view of the initiative (e.g., of desired outcomes, of negotiable and unnegotiable points, and of the initiative in relationship to organizational priorities) in order to see ways in which you might be vulnerable to not truly hearing certain perspectives that run counter to your own. Then, consider other people's perspectives about these same things. Look to understand or become more sensitive to other perspectives.

- If conversation occurs about the initiative, what are the group and individual members of the group talking about?

  The intent of this reflection question is to help pay more attention to what people are talking about with respect to the initiative in order to build upon people's investment. Consider how the content of conversation might provide clues around what motivates and inspires people, what people agree about, what people disagree about, and what assumptions are being made.

- What aren't the group and its individual members talking about?

  This question seeks to gather people's perceptions of the initiative based upon what is not openly discussed. One way to progress might be to ask people to journal and then to talk about what tends to be said about the initiative after meetings (for instance, in the parking lot, behind closed doors, etc.). The absence of certain discussion can hold clues to potential dissatisfaction and latent conflict.

COMMUNICATION TRAIL (CONT.)

- If there is frustration or conflict brewing, is there a way to better understand people's feelings about the initiative?

  The goal is to help people notice, understand, and talk about the indicators of conflict or frustration, since conflict or frustrations left "under the table" may provide clues that someone's investment is eroding. A strategy might be to ask people to say what they consider to be "the unspeakables" in order to provide insights into assumptions that are in operation. Giving voice to the unspeakables may also unveil unmet learning supports and needs, or identify ambiguity in roles and responsibilities. Listening to what people are frustrated about or afraid to say may point out the need for establishing new agreements and new commitments.

- How are decisions being made with this initiative, and to what degree are agreements explicitly made and rechecked?

  This question invites reflection upon how decisions are made around the initiative and specifically offers challenge in the area of being explicit in agreements reached and not reached. Perhaps look at some recent initiative scenarios in which agreements or decisions occurred: who needed to be involved, who was involved, what process was used. Consider whether the processes currently used ensure genuine input into decisions and allow for checking with everyone about their agreement on action. Explicitly getting feedback from everyone (nonverbal methods such as fist-to-five and head nods can be useful, or verbal checks may be practical and comfortable) is a way to genuinely check on people's level of agreement. Disagreements can lead to valuable revisions, new proposals, agreements, reengagements, and growing momentum.

- Are there other questions to ask of yourself...and of the community? Other perspectives to explore?

Either begin another trail or move on to Pause Point 5.

PAUSE POINT 5: ACT UPON AN INSIGHT OR QUESTION THAT EMERGED FROM THE REFLECTION, EXPLORATION, AND CONVERSATION AT A PREVIOUS PAUSE POINT.

- Based upon your reflection, have you reached any new understandings? Are there any possible next steps or actions you might take? For example, is there a specific conversation to have with small groups about their own perspectives as to why this practice matters or could matter to the organization as a whole and to individuals (perhaps guiding conversations up and down the abstraction ladder)? Is there a new way to begin looking at conflict? Is there a new habit that you want to develop in yourself (such as being overt about your agreements and disagreements, or seeking to ask more questions and not make silent assumptions)?
- Is there something more specific about the Shared Responsibility Framework that you'd like to pay attention to or act upon? For example, are there revisions regarding roles and responsibilities? Or revisions pertaining to attending to the level of abstraction? Or revisions pertaining to personal learning needs? Are there any revisions regarding your initiative at hand? If yes, what's the first step you'd like to take?

PAUSE POINT 6. EVALUATE YOUR OWN PROCESS OF LEARNING.

- What are you learning about facilitating change? About yourself as a leader? Any surprises...affirming news...discouraging news? Why?
- Examine and evaluate the usefulness of the discovery process (e.g., the pause points and reflection questions, applying the Shared Responsibility Framework). What was helpful about paying attention to the framework? What wasn't helpful about such a focus?
- Is there a way to track your own responses and reactions to using these questions to support paying attention to certain things? Might there be benefit in recording new questions and insights identified? If yes, what is a manageable way to do this? (For instance, do you already journal or keep certain types of logs that you periodically reexamine?)
- Do you feel that you made progress? If yes, in what way(s)? For example, were there indicators that people became more engaged and committed to the initiative work? Were they more engaged and more committed to one another? Were connections between the initiative and student outcomes more explicitly made?

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